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Labour switches to 'Tessa' system

Blair scraps training levy on firms

By Jill Sherman, Political Correspondent

TONY BLAIR is to ditch Labour's longstanding policy of imposing a compulsory training levy on employers and replace it with tax incentives to encourage firms to improve workers' skills.

He also intends to introduce "training Tessas" under which individuals would get tax relief on savings set aside expressly for recognised courses.

Mr Blair is anxious to remove any policy which smacks of a "tax on jobs" - a charge frequently levelled at Labour by the Government and repeated by John Major only last week. The compulsory training levy, much criticised by the Left, fell firmly into that category.

At the last election the party's manifesto said that all employers would be required to invest a minimum amount on training or pay a sum to a national pool. The sum was not split out, but previous papers suggested about 1.5 per cent of the payroll.

Now Mr Blair and his education and employment spokesman, David Blunkett, want to replace that idea with incentives for both employers and workers, and they will announce the new approach next month.

Under the new "skills revolution", everyone would have a legal right to a "learning entitlement" from the State and be able to open a "training Tessa". Contributions to the account would be subject to tax relief, so long as the money was used only for training courses.

Employers would also get

tax relief for contributing to the account and other incentives - yet to be finalised - for providing in-house training or for sending staff on courses relevant to the job. One option would be to provide state subsidies for existing courses.

The proposed policy shift has been hotly debated within the party for the past year. Some senior party figures are reluctant to drop the plan and trade unionists will also be alarmed by the move. Mr Blunkett intends to assure them that if the new plan failed, a "modernised" compulsory levy would be introduced after three or four years.

The latest draft paper, details of which have been leaked to *The Times*, says: "In government we will take a period of time in which to test and measure the effectiveness of those incentives before we reconsider whether basic entitlement needs to be underpinned by further statutory provision." If national training targets were not reached, the policy would be reviewed again.

Labour's employment team has met employers' organisations, including the Confederation of British Industry, who have made clear that firms are ready to increase training, with a bit of extra help. "A levy is not necessary if the goodwill is there," one party source said.

The draft paper makes

clear, however, that the political climate has to be changed to encourage better skills. "We will introduce a new culture of government which will set

training, learning and skills at the top of the political agenda," it says. "We believe the Government has the responsibility to set the framework for a skills revolution and to play a role in making it happen."

Party sources argued that several firms managed to avoid the training levy because their payroll was too low, or they employed too few people. "The old levy system was ineffective. Employers just spent their time trying to get round it," a source said. He also argued that the labour market had changed significantly in recent years with many more small and medium-sized companies, so policy needed to be adapted.

The new policy has been drawn up by Stephen Byers, recently appointed to the shadow education and employment team from the whitehall. Mr Byers, a high-flyer from the 1992 intake, has produced a number of drafts of his report over the past six weeks. The Treasury team are now looking at the best way of providing fiscal incentives for employers, without added costs to the Exchequer.

Gordon Brown, the Shadow Chancellor, has made clear that any start-up costs will have to be found by targeting existing resources more effectively. One option is to drop some of the existing training schemes which have not been effective. The final report, which will go to the party's economic commission in the middle of next month, will be published towards the end of March.



The Princess arrives at a Lahore restaurant with Jemima Imran Khan last night

Controversy welcomes Princess

By Alan Hamilton

THE Princess of Wales arrived in Pakistan yesterday on a private visit that is already the subject of wild political debate.

Dressed in a pink version of the traditional national costume of *shalwar kameez* - loose-fitting trousers and long shirt - the Princess landed in Lahore in a private jet owned by Sir James Goldsmith, the

financier whose daughter Jemima is married to Imran Khan, the former Pakistani cricket captain. She told local reporters that the sole purpose of her trip was to help to raise funds for Imran's cancer hospital.

But controversy greeted her, with local newspapers pointing out that Imran had declared himself a political opponent of Benazir Bhutto, the Pakistani Prime Minister.

"Princess Diana's sojourn is bound to be seen out of the context of the cancer hospital and read in line with Imran Khan's political ambition," the local English-language daily, *The News*, claimed. The Princess told one newspaper: "I work for social welfare and my visit is only for this purpose." Buckingham Palace distanced itself from the visit, saying it was entirely private.

Hopes rising for bank rates cut

Hopes of a cut in interest rates next month rose yesterday after figures were released showing a 0.6 per cent decline in retail sales in January, although the annual trend is still up. The minutes of January's meeting between the Government and the Bank of England showed the Bank was opposed only to the timing of last month's cut. Page 23

EU seeks to drop national veto

The European Commission put itself on collision course with Britain yesterday by giving preliminary approval to proposals demanding the end to the national veto in almost all areas of EU business. It argues that majority voting is the only way to avoid paralysis of the union. Page 4

The Times on the Internet
<http://www.the-times.co.uk>

'Child killers' blow to Howard

By Frances Gibb, Legal Correspondent and Philip Webster, Political Editor

THE Home Secretary will be forced to hand over his powers to detain child killers indefinitely after the Government was unanimously condemned by the European Court of Human Rights yesterday.

The decision will mean that the two boys who killed the toddler James Bulger could be released after serving their 15-year minimum sentence. To hold young killers without any scrutiny by the courts was a violation of human rights, the judges at Strasbourg said.

Senior Conservatives last night renewed calls for Britain to pull out of the European Convention on Human Rights after the rebuff for Michael Howard. But the Home Secretary is expected to resist the calls led by Sir Ivan Lawrence, chairman of the Home Affairs

Committee, for the incorporation of the convention into British law. Sir Ivan said: "I think people are getting a little fed up with being told what to do by foreign courts. The issue is whether the Home Secretary has the right to decide what part of the additional sentence should be served in order to protect the public."

The European Court judgment also re-opens the debate about the Home Secretary's powers to decide on the release of murderers generally, adults as well as children, and to fix their sentences.

The court, in a case brought by two men now in their 30s, who have been detained at Her Majesty's Pleasure for murder in their teens, said that their date of release should not be decided by the Home Secretary.

Instead of the indefinite detention at Her Majesty's Pleasure - a system brought in nearly a century ago - the

judges said there should be an independent court-like body where those held can make representations.

At the same time, yesterday's ruling prompted a fresh row over the jurisdiction of the European Court of Human Rights, with calls from MPs in all parties for the Government to put an end to such rulings by enshrining the human rights convention into British law.

Yesterday the European Court found that Abed Hussain, from Dewsbury, West Yorkshire and Prem Singh, from the Bradford area, had their rights violated in that they were unable to have the lawfulness of their detention reviewed by a court. They were awarded £19,000 and £13,000 respectively in compensation for legal costs and expenses.

There are a total of 235 juveniles held at Her Majesty's Pleasure. Three are in



local authority secure accommodation, 49 are in young offender institutions (for those over 17) and 189 are in the adult prison system. Last Continued on page 2, col 1

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Leading article, page 19

Dole fights 'for soul of the party'

By Our Foreign Staff

ROBERT DOLE, beaten into second place by Pat Buchanan in Tuesday's New Hampshire primary, said it was now a race between the mainstream and the extreme fringes of the Republican party.

But Lamar Alexander, the former Tennessee Governor who finished third, demanded that Mr Dole quit the presidential race so that mainstream Republicans could unite behind him and defeat Mr Buchanan's protectionist and isolationist populism.

Mr Dole ignored the call and claimed he was now in a battle with Mr Buchanan for "the soul of the party".

Party in shock, page 12
William Rees-Mogg, page 18
Leading article, page 19

Family bans IRA from London bus bomber's funeral

By Nicholas Watt

THE family of Ed O'Brien, the IRA terrorist who blew himself up in the Aldwych bus bombing, yesterday condemned the IRA and extended their sympathy to the victims of the attack.

Miley and Margo O'Brien, from the Co Wexford market town of Gorey, said they did not know their son was an IRA member and told the terrorists to keep away from his funeral.

Their comments came as the Irish Army was called in to bolster security patrols around Dublin after the collapse of the IRA ceasefire. Roving

armed checkpoints have been introduced around the Irish capital amid fears that loyalists will target Dublin if they end their own ceasefire in response to the renewed IRA bombing.

O'Brien's parents expressed shock at the IRA bombing in a statement read out by Michael Cullen, their solicitor. He said: "The O'Brien family wish to express their deep-felt sorrow for those injured and the families of those injured in the explosion on Sunday."

Mr Cullen added that the family had no connection with paramilitaries and that Ed O'Brien had not been involved with the IRA when he lived in Gorey.

"The O'Brien family unreservedly condemn all paramilitary organisations and wish to have nothing to do with such organisations. They do not want any paramilitary involvement in the funeral of their son."

The IRA last night confirmed that O'Brien was a member. The admission was made in a statement telephoned to RTE, the Irish Republic's broadcasting network.

Father Walter Forde, the local curate, who knows the O'Brien family, said: "The news has been greeted with sadness and great surprise. There were very strongly expressed feelings in

Gorey of revulsion for the IRA godfathers who recruit impressionable young people into violent activity."

His comments came as John Bruton, the Irish Prime Minister, launched a stinging attack on the IRA. He told the Dail: "Concern has to remain about the fact that apparently through the ceasefire the IRA's military structures were maintained fully in operational order, punishment beatings were undertaken and the entire organisation was kept on a military footing."

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Evans above! What strong views on teaching standards



Evans, refreshing

"GET stuffed" may not be the sort of expression you expect to hear MPs bandying about in the Chamber, but then David Evans is not the sort of man you expect to see as an MP. The language occurred, of course, during Education Questions. Mr Evans was speaking for himself yesterday, though he often claims to voice his wife Janice's thoughts. He was concerned about standards of teaching in schools.

Opinions are divided about David J. Evans (C, Welwyn, Hatfield). Some think him a ludicrous bundle of noisy Cockney buffoonery. Others

disagree, defending him as a refreshing change from the manicured mediocrity of his parliamentary colleagues. Your sketchwriter's view is that Mr Evans is a ludicrous bundle of noisy Cockney buffoonery and a refreshing change. His daughter, a singer, has just brought out a CD, *Amanda Evans Alone*, which is by all accounts excellent, showing a thoughtful, soulful talent. Inherited from Janice.

David Evans *Alone* yesterday to Education ministers was listed 14th: MPs barely reached it before time was up. Evans had the first 55 min-

MATTHEW PARRIS
POLITICAL SKETCH

utes preparing himself for the moment, bouncing gently, then with increasing violence, on his seat, his face turning slowly from his usual pale pink, through mid-pink to hot pink. As Question 13 closed and his moment neared, Evans's features reached the shade you might expect to see on an exceptionally ardent baboon's bottom.

David Evans called Madam Speaker. To say that

Mr Evans "stood up" would be to mislead. He rises as though from an unseen bouncy castle beneath. He defies gravity: a defiance the more audacious when you note his size. Mr Evans wanted to know what plans the Secretary of State had to sack bad schoolteachers.

"Most teachers," he declared, "are absolutely excellent." From Evans this was shockingly conciliatory, and

we waited for the punch. "BUT," yelled the MP, "a recent survey..."

This pronunciation of survey reminds us of the (apparently true) story about another Cockney, the late Lord Bottomley, who as a Labour MP was sent to Southern Rhodesia by the then Prime Minister, Harold Wilson, to consult the Matabele tribal chiefs. All assembled in traditional dress, in a huge tent in the African bush, to hear him. Bottomley was to open his remarks with "we are gathered here today..."

"We are gathered here," he

declared, beaming, "to die." The chiefs assumed an ambush and rushed screaming from the tent.

...but back to Mr Evans, who now quoted a survey alleging there were "fifteen thousand bad teachers" (then, hastily) "employed by the Labour Party". It was "loony Left councils" who hired these teachers, he added. But "Arriet! Arriet! Arriet!" Mr Evans sent "er son to a grammar school": proof that what "that lot over there" (Labour) were saying to the voters was... the paused for breath, his face now puce. "Get stuffed!" Miss Boothroy's tremor

registered 4 on the Richter scale. Evans subsided suddenly, before she could tell him. You could almost say he ducked.

By chance, the next question, from his colleague John Butcher (C, Coventry SW), was about the Better English Campaign. With implied horror Butcher quoted a BBC sports commentator: "The boy done great." Catching the phrase, Evans looked chuffed.

James Paice, a minister, thought good English was the key. "Nobody," he cooed, "is beyond redemption". Nobody?

Ruling by European Court of Human Rights prompts challenge to Michael Howard

Killers celebrate success after lengthy campaign

By ADRIAN LEE

THE two men at the centre of yesterday's rulings by the European Court of Human Rights were convicted of murder in the 1970s, when they were teenagers. Abid Hussain and Prem Singh heard of the rulings at their prisons and later told legal representatives of their delight at the victory after years of campaigning.

Hussain, 33, who was convicted in 1978 of murdering his 23-month-old brother Mashaq, is at Lindholme prison, South Yorkshire. During his trial at Leeds Crown Court he was described by the judge as "cruel, unfeeling and a dangerous person".

The jury was told that

Hussain was caring for his brother while their mother was ill. The child was admitted to hospital with brain injuries, consistent with those suffered by a punch-drunk boxer whose head had been subjected to years of violent blows. The child died despite surgery.

Hussain, who lived in Dewsbury, West Yorkshire, was said to have told his father: "I hit him. I lost my temper. I kicked him as well." Hussain denied making the statement but was ordered to be detained at Her Majesty's pleasure.

Hussain's family have supported both his campaign in the European court and a fight to clear his name. He was

represented by the pressure group Justice. Kate Akster, the organisation's legal officer, spoke to him yesterday. She said: "All he knows is what he has heard on the radio but he is very pleased. He will be considered for a parole board later this year."

"He is still very much in touch with his father, mother and brothers and sisters and they are supporting him. But he is pretty adamant they don't want to get involved in talking about the ruling."

Hussain had begun studying engineering on a day release course in Sheffield. If he is freed he plans to resume his studies.

Singh, 38, from Bradford, is being held at Wakefield prison

in West Yorkshire. He was convicted of the murder in 1972 of Edith Booth, a 72-year-old disabled spinster. Miss Booth, known as the rose lady because of her immaculate garden, was sexually assaulted and stabbed before her body was dragged into a coal cellar.

The murder was one of Bradford's most notorious crimes. At one stage 100 police officers were involved in the hunt for the killer of Miss Booth, who organised sing-songs at her local Methodist hall.

Leeds Crown Court was told that Singh, a former next door neighbour, had slipped away from a school cross-country run to carry out the killing. The move was robbery and Singh was later seen with a radio believed to have belonged to the victim.

He, too, was ordered to be detained at Her Majesty's pleasure, although he was released on licence in 1990. He was recalled in 1991 following his arrest on charges of fraud and threatening behaviour. Although the charges were dropped, the parole board at first refused to recommend his further release. When it did so in 1994 the Home Secretary, Michael Howard, rejected the recommendation. His decision was later criticised at the High Court by Lord Justice Pill, who said the reasoning was "well below the standard which an applicant is entitled to expect".

Rodney King, Singh's solicitor, said yesterday that his client was "thrilled" by the judgment. "It is a major success for him. He is due to be released on March 18 but he saw this as a case of carrying the flag for others."

The Prison Service refused to allow either man to give interviews yesterday.

Bruce Anderson, page 18
Leading article, page 19



Robert Thompson and Jon Venables, both in secure units in northern England.

Lawyers of Bulger pair contest 15-year jail term

By RICHARD FORD
HOME CORRESPONDENT

MICHAEL HOWARD is to be challenged over his decision to set a 15-year minimum jail term for the child murderers of James Bulger. Lawyers for Jon Venables and Robert Thompson are planning to bring High Court proceedings in April against the Home Secretary.

They will contest Mr Howard's decision to increase the term to be served by the two boys for "deterrence and retribution" to 15 years. Mr Justice Morland, the trial judge, recommended a minimum eight years. Lord Taylor of Gossforth, the Lord Chief Justice, increased that to ten years.

Yesterday's ruling in Strasbourg, in which the nine judges of the European Court said it was a violation of human rights to hold young killers without any scrutiny by the courts, does not overturn the 15-year minimum term imposed by Mr Howard. But if he loses the challenge on the



James Bulger, abducted and killed at age of two

tariff to be heard later this year, Venables and Thompson, now aged 12, could be released early.

Denise Bulger, mother of James, who was two at the time of his death, yesterday demanded that the jailed boys remain in custody for the rest of their lives. "Thompson and Venables took a life and they

should do life themselves," she said. Mrs Bulger added: "I don't think it is right that the European courts should interfere in British justice."

But Ralph Bulger, father of James, had no comment on the matter. Rex Makin, his solicitor said: "In the long run it will be an advantage to have this matter resolved once and for all, so the grieving and bereaved should not be subject to constant re-activation."

Venables and Thompson were ordered to be detained at Her Majesty's Pleasure at Preston Crown Court in November 1993. They had murdered James Bulger after taking him from a shopping centre in Merseyside.

The two boys are serving their sentences at secure units in the North of England that are part of a network of facilities for violent, disturbed and dangerous youngsters. The boys will remain at the units until at least the age of 18 when they will transfer to a young offenders' institution and at 21 into a prison.

Pressure grows for Bill of Rights

By FRANCES GIBBS
LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

THE Government faces mounting cross-party pressure to avoid further embarrassing rulings by incorporating the European Convention on Human Rights into British law. Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrat politicians voiced their support yesterday for such a move, which already has strong backing among senior judges.

Britain and Ireland are now the only two countries out of the 38 Council of Europe members that have not incorporated the European convention into domestic law or produced a written Bill of Rights.

It is one reason why Britain trails only Italy and Turkey for the numbers of cases brought over alleged human rights abuses. Yesterday Sir Ivan Lawrence, QC, the Conservative chairman of the Home Affairs Select Committee, said: "I think people are getting a little fed up at being told what to do by foreign courts." He told BBC Radio 4's

Britain has been in the dock at the European Court of Human Rights over several allegations. Rulings include May 1988: three women, from Malawi, the Philippines and Sri Lanka, successfully challenge immigration laws denying their husbands automatic entry to Britain.

April 1988: murderer Jimmy Boyle won a claim that correspondence was unlawfully interfered with in prison. July 1989: the extradition of Jens Soering, a West German, to the US on two murder charges was blocked because he could face years on death row.

October 1990: three sex offenders won a ruling forcing a review of the way life-sentence prisoners are released on licence and then recalled.

February 1995: relatives of three IRA terrorists killed in Gibraltar won ruling condemning the shooting.

Today programme: "Maybe we should incorporate the European Convention on Human Rights into British law so British courts should decide these issues rather than foreign courts."

Another Tory MP, Patrick Nicholson, who chairs the Conservative backbench legal committee, said: "This really is the last straw. It's yet another example of countries, many of whom have had a deplorable

Strasbourg is to give British courts the powers of the courts in Strasbourg."

The Government has always resisted pressure to enshrine the convention into British law, but the case has never been as widely supported as now after a series of rulings against Britain.

If the convention were made part of domestic law, then alleged abuses of human rights would be decided in British courts. It would mean people having a much quicker remedy than the five-year trail to Strasbourg. Lord Irvine of Lairg, the Shadow Lord Chancellor, has already pledged to implement the reform.

The Euro-sceptic wing of the Conservative Party recently urged Britain to pull out of the European Convention altogether, but the Government agreed last month to sign up for a further five years. This was its last chance to pull out. Britain has already agreed a new protocol on the merging of the Commission and Court into a full-time body to which it would be permanently committed.

HIV foreigners win housing battle

By IAN MURRAY

THE Government's efforts to stop "benefit tourism" were set back yesterday when the Court of Appeal ruled that a council must house two unemployed men with HIV from Spain and Italy.

Even though the two have no right of residence in Britain, the court decided that Westminster Council acted unlawfully when it refused to find accommodation for them. The landmark ruling overturns a High Court judgment last October, which said that Westminster did not have to house them because, under European Union law, they had lost their right to live in Britain by failing to look for work.

In their unanimous ruling, the three appeal judges said the two had entered Britain lawfully, exercising their right to

freedom of movement under the Treaty of Rome. They were not in breach of immigration laws and were therefore entitled to be housed by the local authority.

Westminster was given leave to appeal to the House of Lords and is considering whether to do so. Ayer Kamal, representing the council, said the decision meant that housing authorities had to provide accommodation to all EU nationals, even if they did not have the right of residence.

The appeal judgment is unlikely to stand for long, however, because new legislation, expected to come into force this autumn, will stop EU nationals moving to Britain to work unless they prove they have found somewhere to live.

Euro-sceptic Tories condemned the decision. Julian Brazier, MP for Camber-

bury, said: "This is one more example of Euro-legislation and Euro-practices creeping into British courts."

The men who brought the legally aided test case, Gaudentio Castelli, 36, and Jose Tristano-Garcia, 33, both had jobs after arriving in Britain but gave up working when they became ill.

The judgment was welcomed by the Terence Higgins Trust, the HIV and AIDS charity that supported the two. Nick Partridge, the chief executive, said: "European legislation now encourages people from other EU countries to come to the UK to work and contribute to the economy. This case demonstrates that if they become too ill to work then they should still be entitled to the protection that others enjoy in such tragic circumstances."

Catholic converts highest for 20 years

The number of adult converts to Roman Catholicism has reached the highest figure for more than 20 years, it was disclosed yesterday. As thousands of people prepare to be received into the Catholic church in traditional ceremonies this Sunday, the first in Lent, figures just released show that more than 6,000 people converted last year, an increase of more than 1,000 on the year before. Monsignor Kieran Conry, director of the Catholic Media Office, said: "It is encouraging, especially after reports of an apparent fall in mass attendance. The indications are that last year's increase will continue."

Player jailed

A rugby forward who punched a rival, breaking his jaw in three places, was jailed for nine months at Kingston Crown Court, southwest London. Simon Devereux, 27, a 1st XI flanker for Gloucestershire's second team, was found guilty of causing grievous bodily harm with intent to the 15th, Rosslyn Park, captain, Jamie Cowie, 23.

Prisons record

The number of prisoners in jails in England and Wales reached a record of 55,040 yesterday. The prison population has risen from 46,606 since the end of 1992 and is expected to increase a further 5,000 during the next four years. The Penal Affairs Consortium attacked the rise at a time when prisons were being told to make cuts.

Branson deflates

Richard Branson postponed his bid to fly round the world by balloon yesterday, vowing to return to his Morocco launch site in October for another attempt. The Virgin tycoon has been ready to take off from Marrakesh since mid-January, but the flight has been frustrated by ground winds and the country's heaviest rain since 1977.

Saved by the net

A Scottish minister who shopped unconsensually while on the Internet was rescued by a user in Virginia, USA, who spotted his erratic keystrokes. Vicky White, a nurse, rang a co-ordinator in Boston, Massachusetts, who alerted Tyneside police. With in four minutes an ambulance was at the Rev Ken Walker's home in Arbroath.

Flight abandoned

British aviators have abandoned their attempt to fly to South Africa in a 60-year-old Tiger Moth biplane known as Skippy. David Biddiffe and Tony Richards had been delayed by repeated engine failures in southern Italy, which meant that air clearances negotiated for flying through Africa were out of date.

Frank Warren

Our report (February 14) about the seven-year directorship ban on Frank Warren referred to a "gangland" shooting incident in which he was the victim. We accept that this was not an instance of gangsterism, in which he has never been involved, and that he was in fact shot by an unidentified assailant. We also accept that Mr Warren rejected the allegation made in court that he had traded while insolvent. We apologise for these errors.

A drunken man who hijacked a bus (report, February 20) was not, as an agency report inaccurately stated, a medical student at St Thomas's Hospital, London.

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BY FRANCES GIBBS
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Town the forgot she the bombe

Couple refuse to go as house teeters on cl

Darts team ta cakes are spi

People in Gorey couldn't care less about republicanism, especially with a few pints inside them'

Town the Troubles forgot shocked by the bomber it bred

FROM NICHOLAS WATT
IN GOREY, CO WEXFORD

THE small market town of Gorey, which lies along the picturesque east coast of Ireland, is the most unlikely place to have produced an IRA bomber.

Colourful old shops line the wide main street like thousands of other similar towns in the Republic. The border with Northern Ireland is more than 100 miles away, and to locals the Troubles disappeared when Ireland was divided in 1921.

Shopkeepers and publicans yesterday greeted with disbelief the news that Ed O'Brien, a fresh-faced local boy who was known for his athletic prowess, had given his life for a cause which is regarded with disdain in Gorey. Locals described his parents, Miley and Margo, as upstanding members of the community who were devoted to their family. Mrs O'Brien, whose other children, Gary and Lorraine, still live at home, attends Mass every day and works for local charities.

Father Walter Forde, the local priest, remembered O'Brien as an altar boy. He spoke for the community when he said: "There was never any indication that Ed



Ed O'Brien, aged 12, in school football kit

had any involvement with violence or terrorist activity. There are very strongly expressed feelings of revulsion for the IRA godfathers who recruit impressionable young people into violent activity which ends as tragically as it has done for Ed and for the people who were injured in the various recent bombings."

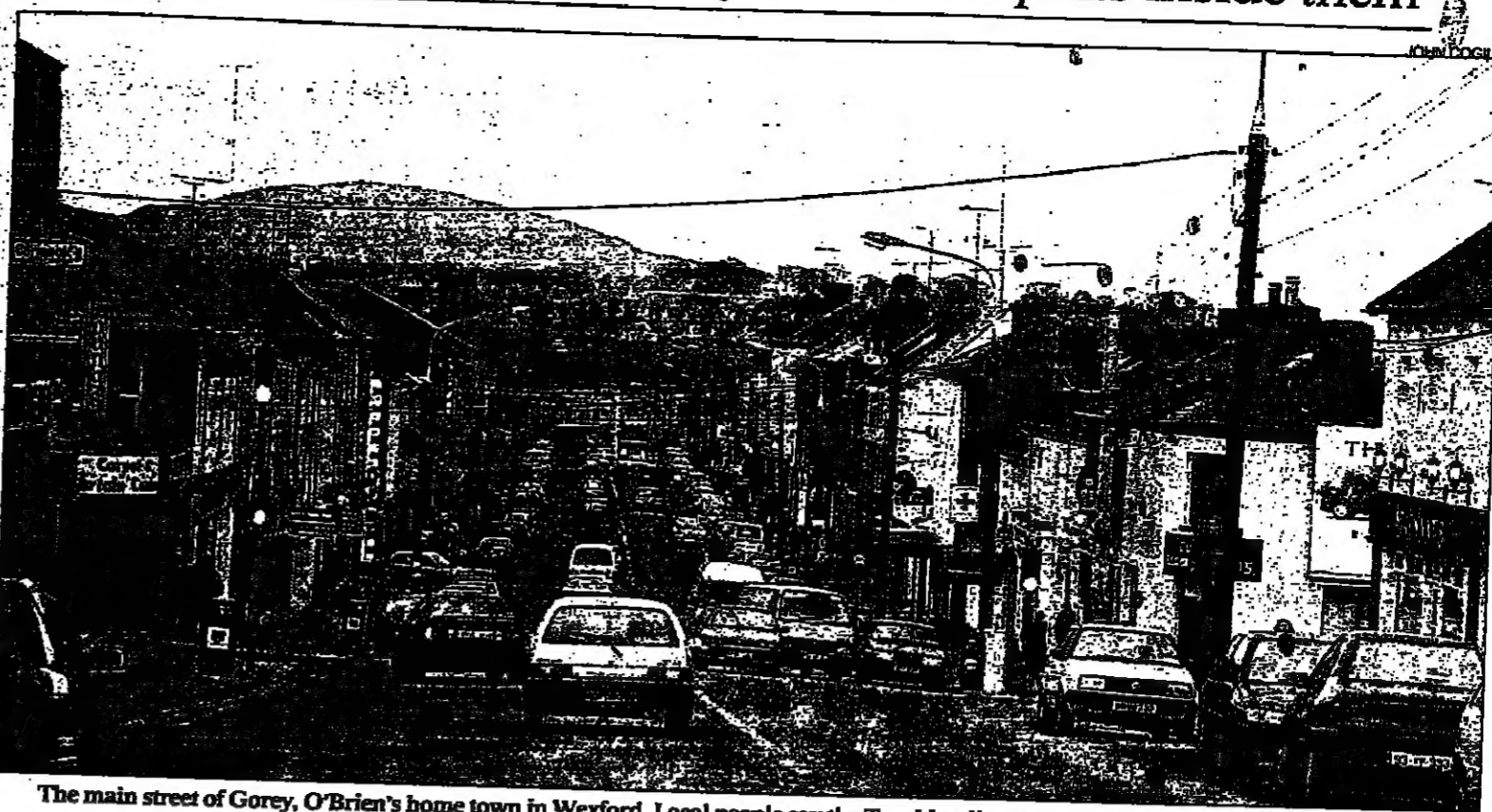
Fr Forde, who is best known in Ireland for his tireless defence of the local bishop, who was recently treated in America for alcohol abuse, described O'Brien as "whole some". He said: "He was very independent, tough, depend-

able and open. He was the last person you would expect to be involved in activity like this."

Locals echoed his comments when they said they were trying to ignore how someone from Gorey could have felt so strongly about the republican cause. They could understand how someone from West Belfast or South Armagh might get sucked into the IRA, but not how someone would join from such an innocuous town.

Gorey made its most notable contribution to republicanism nearly 200 years ago when the United Irishmen stormed Gorey in an effort to reach the coast road to Dublin. The town's only visible connection to republicanism today is a granite monument outside the Garda station which commemorates the founding in 1792 of the first society in Wexford of the United Irishmen. It says their aim was "to unite all the people of Ireland".

A shop owner, who asked to remain anonymous, said that people tried to cut the Troubles from their minds. She said: "There is no republican movement in Gorey. People don't care less once they have got a few pints inside them. In my mind, you, the younger generation have more spirit."



The main street of Gorey, O'Brien's home town in Wexford. Local people say the Troubles disappeared when Ireland was divided in 1921

Lilywhites: the rebels without an obvious cause

BY STEWART TENDLER
CRIME CORRESPONDENT

ED O'BRIEN was the perfect example of the new breed of IRA active service volunteers. Nicknamed the "Lilywhites" because they appear to be above suspicion, they are uncovered only by capture or death.

When O'Brien landed at Heathrow for Holyhead there was nothing to arouse a flicker of curiosity among watching Special Branch officers. He had no criminal record, no obvious links to the republican movement and

came from a respectable family in an Irish town far from the heartland of nationalist politics. O'Brien seemed just another Irish worker among thousands looking for a job.

He may have been recruited in Britain while moving in Irish circles but he is more likely to have been drawn into the IRA in Ireland where his background and suitability could be properly assessed. O'Brien would certainly have been trained there. Police believe his death indicates he was still a novice who made a fatal mistake. Certainly he is not the first

Lilywhite to make that error. In 1991 Patricia Black, 18, and Frankie Ryan, 25, blew themselves up trying to bomb the band of the Blues and Royals at a concert in St Albans, Hertfordshire. Black had no IRA links and Ryan lived in Harlow, Essex, until he was 19.

Others are now in prison. In 1993 Jimmy Canning, from Ulster, was jailed as an IRA quartermaster in London handling weapons and explosives for active service units. He had no criminal record. Patrick Kelly, 41, an Irish lorry driver with a history of petty crime, was convicted in 1994 for trying

to deliver a lorry bomb in the centre of London. Later the same year Jan Taylor, 50, and Patrick Hayes, 41, were jailed for life as two of the most dangerous IRA men on the mainland. Both were English and former members of an extreme left-wing group but had never been linked to terrorism.

Each terrorist was chosen as part of a policy initiated by the IRA to combat highly successful infiltration by the security forces. Recruits must have no history linked to the IRA and choose their own targets according to guidelines.

Couple refuse to go as house teeters on cliff

By RUSSELL JENKINS

GEORGE SCOTT and his wife Jean awoke yesterday to find the North Sea just six inches from their back door, but the couple are refusing to move. Spring tides, driven by gale-force winds, have attacked the two-bedroom bungalow in Happisburgh, on the exposed Norfolk coast, leaving it teetering on a 25ft cliff.

Mr Scott, a 71-year-old former bus driver, and his wife, 56, have been warned by police and council officials that it may topple over into the sea at any minute, but they can't bear to leave their "dream" retirement home.

On Sunday, waves driven by unusually high tides and 55mph winds broke through the newly repaired sea defences, tearing off the remaining 7ft of the back garden.

A gaping 6ft hole has now opened up under the concrete foundations of the two-bedroom seaside home, making its collapse inevitable and alarming police and council officials in nearby North Walsham. After a neighbouring chalet toppled into the sea three days ago the police asked the couple to sign a disclaimer against their death or injury and North Norfolk Council offered them an emergency home. But Mr and Mrs Scott are determined to remain in



The Scotts determined to enjoy their sea view

the doomed building, locals call "Scotts Folly" for as long as possible.

Mrs Scott said: "People might think we are stupid to be staying here, but this is our dream retirement home and we do not want to leave. Despite the risk of the sea washing us away, it is still a lovely place to live. The local people are wonderful and we have spectacular sea views."

Mr Scott, who bought the house for £15,000 in 1987, said: "I am very upset. It is getting a bit much for us now but we are determined to carry on. When the house was built in 1933 its back garden was 180ft long.

Cocker demands Jackson apology

By EMMA WILKINS

JARVIS COCKER, singer with the pop group Pulp who was arrested after claims that he assaulted children during the Brit awards, demanded an apology yesterday from Michael Jackson.

Cocker, 32, insists Jackson to retract a statement which condemned his antics and alleged that children were attacked in the incident. Although admitting that he disrupted Mr Jackson's performance at Monday night's ceremony, Cocker denies that he attacked any children.

"Jarvis wants an apology and a retraction," a spokesman for Cocker said yesterday. "He has made it clear that he didn't attack any children. If children were inadvertently pushed, it was not by Jarvis. We want an apology from Jackson, but I suppose the next step would be to consider libel proceedings."

Michael Jackson's statement, which described the incident as disgusting and cowardly, was issued on his behalf by Sony Music. A spokesman for the singer declined to comment on yesterday's demand. Cocker was arrested after the alleged assaults and bailed until next month.

The latest exchange between the two singers came as the solicitor acting for five children from the Sylvia Young Theatre School, who were performing with Jackson, said that they were suffering from emotional and physical damage. Michael Shelton said: "The children were scared witless. They were all absolutely petrified."

Sylvia Young, who runs her theatre school in Paddington, west London, said: "The children were left feeling very upset. Everything is now in the hands of the solicitor."

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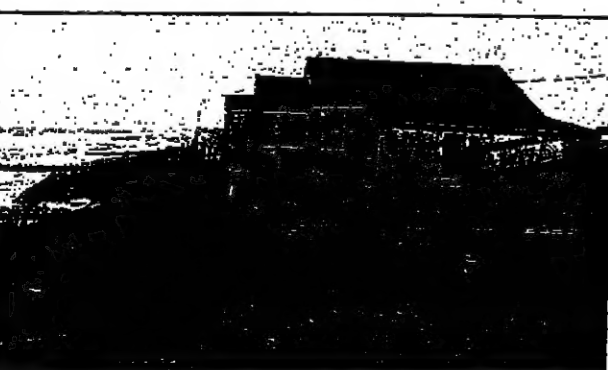
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MORTGAGES



The two-bedroom house dubbed "Scotts Folly"

Darts team takes flight after cakes are spiked with LSD

By RICHARD DUCE

A DARTS match was abandoned as one team collapsed into laughter and hysteria after its pre-match buffet was spiked with hallucinogenic drugs. Most of the team from the Fortynine Club, Caerphilly, Mid Glamorgan, aged between 21 and 62, were taken to hospital after they were either reduced to tears or uncontrollable fits of giggling during an away match in nearby Llanharry on Tuesday night.

Three men were detained overnight because their heart rate was affected by the drug, believed to be LSD or "magic mushrooms", which was added to their Welsh cakes. De-

spite the ill-effects, the Fortynine club was winning 3-1 at the Fox and Hounds pub when the match had to be called off.

Dennis Morgan, 45, captain of the Caerphilly team, said: "My team just started going down like ninetins. One minute we were winning 3-1 and confident of victory, the next it all started to go wrong. "It was just as if all of my team were dead drunk - it was really weird. They started laughing and giggling and some burst into tears. They were falling down, sitting on the floor and acting stupid."

Emma Cannon, 23, barmaid at the Fox and Hounds, said yesterday: "All the younger men were helpless with

laughter but the older guys burst out crying. Nobody knew what was going on. At first it was quite funny but some of the players became really ill so we called for an ambulance. In the end it took four ambulances to get them all to hospital. There were only four of the away team left at the end. Apparently they didn't eat the cakes because they were dying."

The ten men who were taken to hospital in Bridgend had all eaten at the Fortynine club before setting off for the match. South Wales Constabulary said yesterday a 39-year-old man, and a 19-year-old woman were being interviewed at Caerphilly police station.

Britain opposes Commission plan

Europe urged to ditch national veto and end 'paralysis'

FROM CHARLES BREMNER IN BRUSSELS AND PHIL WEBSTER

THE European Commission yesterday gave broad approval to a plan for revamping the Maastricht treaty by eliminating the national veto in almost all areas of EU business.

While shunning any leap to new structures, the Commission's blueprint for the imminent Maastricht review argues that majority voting rather than unanimity among member states is the only way to avoid paralysis as the Union incorporates new members.

Britain rejects any reduction in the veto, and reform to the decision-making procedures where it applies will be a main battle-ground at the Intergovernmental Conference, which opens in Turin on March 29 and will last more than a year.

The Commission, which is to approve a final draft of its plan next Wednesday, also

urges member states to adopt a multiple-speed approach which would prevent member blocking moves to integration as the Union enlarges. Britain is the main target of the measure, which is being backed by France, Germany, Italy and others.

More controversially, the draft, which will be "fine-tuned" before final approval by Jacques Santer, the Commission president, and his 19 colleagues, suggests that less-er aspects of the union's treaties could be subject to future change without the unanimous approval of members. The notion is certain to be resisted not just by Britain but also by France and other member states.

The Commission calls for a strengthened common foreign policy where national vetoes would only apply in matters of

vital interest and those involving military action. At present decisions in this area, managed between governments, are taken by so-called qualified majority. This falls in line with the wishes of Germany and the majority of member states.

Sources said there was disagreement among Commissioners yesterday over the wording of a call to "re-examine the role of the Western European Union in view of its integration into the Union". Britain and other states are opposed to incorporating the WEU, the European pillar of Nato, into the EU. France, however, wants it "subordinated" to the EU.

Neil Kinnock, the former Labour leader, surprised fellow Commissioners in his criticism of aspects of the draft which were noded through

by Sir Leon Brittan, the trade Commissioner and former Conservative Cabinet Minister. On the sensitive issue of justice and home affairs, the Commission backs the thinking of France and many other members who want it to take charge of the day-to-day running of home affairs, a field now handled entirely between governments. The proposal is fiercely resisted by Britain.

The exception would be civil and criminal justice, but the veto should be removed from the whole field, the Commission proposes.

The British Cabinet will next week put the final touches to a White Paper to be published next month, setting out its stance for the conference. The document, with which Malcolm Rifkind, the Foreign Secretary, and John Major

hope to achieve a new consensus on Europe, will rule out hardline Euro-sceptic demands for a repatriation of powers from Brussels.

Mr Major last night faced fresh unrest among Tory Euro-sceptics after the Government rejected a call from an all-party group of MPs for a Commons debate on the terms for entry into a single currency. The dispute was

triggered by a letter from Tony Newton, the Leader of the Commons, to the Select Committee on European Legislation.

The committee had called for a full-scale debate to clear up confusion over whether Britain would have to rejoin the ERM before embarking on the final stage of economic and monetary union.

In a recent report, the

committee said that the Prime Minister had given contradictory answers over whether the ERM hurdle, as set out in the Maastricht treaty, still applied after its effective break-up, and called for it to be debated.

Mr Newton agreed that the ERM test was of political importance but ruled that the matter should be debated in a standing committee, away from the floor of the House.



Volker Rühle, the German Defence Minister, inspects a guard of honour yesterday before talks with Michael Portillo, the Defence Secretary

British Library will finally open nine years late

BY NIGEL WILLIAMSON, WHITEHALL CORRESPONDENT

THE troubled British Library will not be ready for a long-planned formal opening by the Queen next year. A damning report from the National Audit Office, due to be published in April, will conclude that poor management was responsible for a catalogue of avoidable technical disasters that have left the building behind schedule yet again.

The report will also warn that costs continue to spiral out of control and are likely to exceed £500 million, almost three times the original estimate. A Whitehall source said: "This is possibly the most critical report the NAO has ever produced."

Dr Brian Lang, the library's chief executive, said yesterday: "We are bracing ourselves for the report and it will have a bad effect on morale. There have been problems but the NAO report is about history. We are now very confident in the future of the building."

The library was originally due to open in 1989. It intends to announce a "firm timetable" next month, which will envisage taking over the building on the St Pancras site from the Department of National Heritage by early next year. The first readers should be using the facilities 12 months later, Dr Lang said. "The bad

period is in the past. We are now looking forward to a successful opening. There has been a sea-change in recent months."

He emphasised that opening the library to the public would be a "rolling programme", with some sections not fully open until 1999. He denied reports that have claimed that some parts of the library will not be fully operational until into the next century.

The highly critical NAO report has been the subject of much wrangling between the watchdog and Virginia Bottomley, Secretary of State for National Heritage. The department has asked Sir John Bourn, head of the NAO, to tone down some criticisms. But the NAO will severely criticise aspects of the financial management and report that many of the technical problems that have contributed to the delays and increased costs were easily avoidable.

The building has been blighted by a series of problems since it was first planned in the 1970s to replace the present British Museum site and its historic round reading room. In 1991, moveable shelves custom-designed for the library jammed and started throwing books to the floor.

In 1992 the air conditioning system was found to be faulty. Sections of the building flooded. In 1993, 5,000 defective sprinklers had to be replaced. In 1994, more than 2,000 miles of electric cabling was ripped out when it was discovered that faults had left it vulnerable to short-circuiting. Last year a ceiling was found to have been built too low and had to be demolished and replaced.

In November electricians and engineers walked out in a dispute over unpaid wages. A round of cuts last month reduced staff by up to 200.

Leading article, page 19



Lang mistakes are in the past

Mackay presents Times law prizes

BY FRANCES GIBB, LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

FEARS about the Government's reforms of the legal profession, which were bitterly opposed by judges and the Bar five years ago, had proved unfounded, the Lord Chancellor said last night.

Announcing the winners of the 1995 Times Law Awards competition, sponsored by the chambers of Anthony Grabiner, QC, at Essex Court, Lord Mackay of Clashfern said the impact of the reforms had been oversold. With the benefit of hindsight, the breaking of the Bar's monopoly on advocacy rights so that solicitor would be allowed into the higher courts had not had the disastrous effects predicted.

There had been a slow take-up by solicitors of these rights, Lord Mackay said. With the greater trend towards specialisation in the legal profession, it would be unlikely that the specialism of

advocacy would evaporate overnight as some suggested it might during the passage of the Courts and Legal Services Bill.

Lord Mackay was commenting on the entries received for the competition title *Advocacy—has it a future?* at a dinner held in the Old Hall, Lincoln Inn. First prize of £3,000 went to Remika Kukanesen, a law student at Nottingham University, second prize (£2,000) to James Nicholls, a mature student at the University of North London, and third (£1,000) to Christopher Daniels, of Trinity Hall, Cambridge. The runners-up, who each received £250, were Philip Daniels, Jasbir Dhillon, and Daniel Raglan.

A full report of the awards will be published on Tuesday.

Law Report, page 38

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Film nonsense and insensibility almost stopped Austen epic

By DAIZA ALBERGE
ARTS CORRESPONDENT

THE five most important studios in Hollywood turned down Emma Thompson's adaptation of Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* when it was offered to them in 1990, the film's producer revealed yesterday. Executives had not heard of Thompson or Austen.

Five years later, the movie that has attracted eight Oscar nominations, two Golden Globe awards and multi-million-dollar takings at the American box-office, is opening in Britain tomorrow. Its charity premiere, attended by the Prince of Wales, was held last night.

Lindsay Doran, the producer, had approached executives at Paramount, Universal, Warner, Disney and Twentieth Century Fox. "All said no," she recalled. "It was hard to keep going after so much rejection."

She was on the point of giving up when someone at Columbia TriStar casually ex-



Jane who? Hollywood hadn't heard of Austen

pressed interest in an adaptation of a Jane Austen book. The regimes at the other studios, she said, had changed since then.

One of the executives was gallant enough to admit his mistake.

"He said, 'It's the greatest regret of my life. I loved the movie. I'm sorry I didn't have

the foresight to do it.' She expects others 'to vote against it' on awards, explaining that in Hollywood, 'that's what you do with a movie: you haven't seen the light on. You hope that it fails. You're a human being.'

"It's hard in human nature to be gracious. Being gracious is very untypical in Hollywood — though Hollywood is only human nature under a magnifying glass. Everything satirised in Austen, you see in Hollywood. Fanny and John talk themselves out of giving the Dashwoods any money, despite a dead-end promise; they talk themselves into being better people for not giving money. You see that every day of the week in Hollywood because so much money is at stake. They start out making an agreement to do something and have no intention of doing it. They feel justified in not doing it."

Her difficulties in getting the film off the ground were partly due to Thompson being an unknown quantity. "In



Emma Thompson with producer Lindsay Doran: eight Oscar nominations

1990, her name meant nothing." The reactions ranged from "Who's Emma Thompson?" to "Who's Jane Austen?"

Ms Doran added: "The irony was that if they had read Austen, they would ask, 'why make a movie out of what's considered Austen's worst book?' All she was seeking initially was someone to pay Ms Thompson to write the script. 'People were saying, 'if she writes it, isn't she going to want to be in it?'"

Ms Doran had dreamed of

making a film of the novel for 25 years. She read it at the age of 22, while recuperating from a car crash in Britain.

As the daughter of a senior studio executive at Paramount working on films such as *Some Like It Hot*, she had lived and breathed films: when she read anything, she was subconsciously looking for its cinematic qualities.

She said that, although *Emma* is a greater book, "the best movies have been made out of second-rate books —

great books have an intangible quality. You cannot get their greatness on film."

The film has taken \$25 million since it opened in December in America, although it has still not opened nationwide there. Its Oscar nominations for best screenplay, actress, supporting actress, film, director, cinematographer, dramatic score and costume are expected to increase the figure.

Review, page 31

Eurostar crawls to Paris in 14 hours

By JONATHAN PEYNN

HUNDREDS of Eurostar passengers were trapped inside the Channel Tunnel for three hours during a nightmare trip to Paris, where they arrived nearly 11 hours late. They finally limped into the Gare du Nord at 4am yesterday, 14 hours after setting out from London, after transferring to a conventional train.

The packed train was the second Eurostar to get stuck in the tunnel during the blizzards that have swept the South East. It left Waterloo on Tuesday at 12.53pm loaded with passengers from other delayed services. Three miles into the tunnel it was halted by a technical hitch thought to be caused by the sudden change in temperature. Emergency batteries kept the lights on for about two hours before passengers were left with only the tunnel lights and no heating.

A spokesman for EPS, the Government-owned company that operates Eurostar, said passengers were being offered compensation. They said they were considering suing.

SATURDAY IN THE TIMES

TAX & Financial Planning



Free 20-page guide to tax and financial planning

Tom Bower on Nick Leeson, in Weekend

Bruce Springsteen on *The Ghost of Tom Joad*, in the Magazine

PLUS Car 96, 1015 for young Times readers and Vision, the seven-day television and radio guide

Viewers must pay £10 to see Tyson-Bruno

By ALEXANDRA FREAN AND SRUKUMAR SEN

VIEWS of cable and satellite television will have to pay £9.95 to watch next month's world-heavyweight fight between Frank Bruno and Mike Tyson, as part of an experiment to bring American-style pay-per-view TV to Britain.

BSkyB, the satellite broadcaster, said it had chosen the eagerly awaited World Boxing Council fight, to be held in the early hours of March 17 in Las Vegas, to test its new pay-per-view system. If it is successful, the company plans to extend the practice to major cultural and sporting events.

David Elstein, programmes director at Sky, said: "We might be able to persuade a European operator to put a major sold-out music event on pay-per-view in the UK."

The Bruno/Tyson match will be available to all of Sky's 4.7 million subscribers. They will be able to "order" the match in advance by telephone and the viewing fee would then be debited. Anyone purchasing it after midnight on Friday, March 15, will have to pay £14.95.

The move is likely to prove unpopular with BSkyB subscribers, who already have to pay at least £15.99 a month to

receive the Sky multi-channel package that includes three sports channels, Sky Sports and Sky Sports 2 and Sky Sports Gold. An opinion poll of 500 adults published yesterday by the media research company CIA MediaLab showed that 66 per cent of cable and satellite viewers would be unlikely to use pay-per-view television.

In order to circumvent legal challenges from Sky subscribers that they are being asked to pay out extra money for something they already paid for, BSkyB will screen the match on the same transmitter used by Sky Sports 2 after midnight on March 16.

Bruno, the reigning WBC heavyweight champion, is receiving £4 million for the bout. But Frank Warren, his promoter, suggested that could be increased if the event was a success.

Mr Elstein said that BSkyB had attempted to keep the price down. Don King, Tyson's promoter, had initially demanded that the pay-per-view price be set at £20 to £25.

BSkyB is 40 per cent owned by News International, owner of *The Times*.

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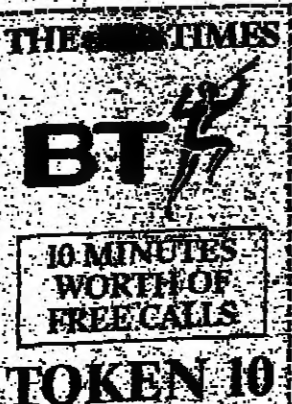
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Stricken supertanker: 'Mr Goschen,' went the minister's ditty, 'has no notion of the ocean'

Labour aims to torpedo 'boy scout' on the bridge

BY ALICE THOMSON
POLITICAL REPORTER

WHEN Viscount Goschen was made minister for shipping at the tender age of 28, he was called an old family ditty, "Mr Goschen has no notion of the ocean". Two years later, facing calls for his resignation over the handling of the stricken supertanker *Sea Empress*, the ditty must seem more like a curse.

The youngest minister has found life in the Government extremely tough. Not only does he have to spend hours smashing champagne bottles on ships' hulls, he has also had to negotiate with the French over tougher safety measures for ferries and spend days touring countries such as Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Kirghizia.

Friends say that every time the phone goes in the middle of the night, he is convinced another ferry must have capsized and he will have to rush to the scene of the disaster. He also has responsibility for aviation, and spends hours embroiled in arguments with residents over new runways.

To make matters worse, the 4th Viscount is very conscious that he comes from a long and distinguished line of eminent politicians and seafarers. His father was a deputy chief whip



The Goschen crest: the Latin word paxem (peace) with anchors, a dove, a sailor and Royal Marine

In the Lords. The second Viscount was an MP, Governor of Madras and Viceroy and Acting Governor-General in India.

The first Viscount became Salisbury's Chancellor when Lord Randolph Churchill resigned in a huff in 1886. Someone suggested the name of Goschen, a financial expert and Liberal Unionist, and Salisbury said, "I had forgotten Goschen." He was First Lord of the Admiralty twice.

Giles John Harry Goschen went to Eton and then the Central London Polytechnic, where he graduated in business studies. His friends

thought he seemed more interested in saving the planet than plotting politics.

He went into the City as a stockbroker, but started studying African fauna. He and his future wife, Sally Horsfall, whom he met at a hunt ball, went out to Zambia to work for a conservation agency. But after dodging hippopotami and crocodiles, they decided to return to what they believed were safer waters.

Lord Goschen started using his House of Lords club regularly, always arriving by motorbike, and was soon rewarded. At the tender age of 26, before he had even made

his maiden speech, he was offered the position of Government whip.

The Department of the Environment didn't realise he was attached to them for weeks and Downing Street knew nothing about the Government's new recruit for months. But Lord Goschen has slowly made his way up the political ranks.

Advocates of reform of the House of Lords always point to him, and are horrified that such a young man could be sent to represent Britain's shipping interests around the world. But although Lord Goschen has an unfortunate flat delivery, he has a good grasp of detail and is an effective boy scout for the Government.

Today he will be representing the Government in the Lords during the third reading of the Humber Bridge (Depts) Bill. Labour have promised to call for his head.

Lord Goschen may be wishing he were back in Africa. [Graham Allen, Labour's transport spokesman, accused the Government of "gross misjudgment" over the tanker, and of failing to implement a recommendation of the Donaldson report into the 1993 *Bruer* disaster, for a powerful tug to be maintained in the Western Approaches.



Takeaway chef delivers salvation

BY ANDREW PIERCE

ONE of the unlikely early heroes of the *Sea Empress* rescue operation was a chef in a Chinese takeaway restaurant. Paul Chung, 29, was halfway through cooking his speciality dish, Peking-style chicken, when a fireman burst into the Happy Garden restaurant at Hakin, Milford Haven, to ask for help.

The Chinese supertanker *De Yue* had been diverted from Falmouth to help the stricken *Sea Empress* but the coastguards could not understand a word the

Chinese crew were saying. Staff co-ordinating the rescue operation, who regularly buy takeaways from the restaurant half a mile from the docks, immediately thought of Paul.

Mr Chung, a Hong Kong-born bachelor who came to Britain 20 years ago, said: "A fireman rushed in and asked if I spoke good Chinese. I told him I could offer only Cantonese. They could not tell the difference so within minutes I was at the port offices speaking to the Chinese crew by radio. The coastguards told me what they wanted the crew to do and I

translated it into Cantonese. Fortunately there was at least one Cantonese speaker on board but it was difficult to make myself heard. The line was faint and crackling."

Mr Chung, a distinctive figure in the area, is now the talk of the town. "People have been congratulating me for helping keep the ship off the rocks. I keep saying: 'I have never taken such a strange order before in my restaurant.' My parents are bemused by it all. They cannot speak any English so I have to keep translating for them."

Fishermen face indefinite ban

BY MICHAEL HORNSBY, AGRICULTURE CORRESPONDENT

FISHING in the contaminated area of the *Sea Empress* spill may have to be halted indefinitely, fisheries officials said yesterday.

Lobsters, crabs, oysters, cockles, mussels and other fish caught in the rich grounds off southwest Wales fetch more than £7 million a year at first sale, providing jobs for about 1,000 people.

At an emergency meeting in Milford Haven on Tuesday night, nearly a hundred fishermen, traders and processors agreed to observe an immediate voluntary ban on fishing to prevent any risk of contaminated goods going on sale.

The ban will last initially for four days, covering an area that reaches six miles out to sea and all the way from the Gower peninsula in the east to St David's Head in the west, a distance of some 30 miles.

The meeting also agreed to take legal advice on seeking compensation from the owners of the *Sea Empress* for any damage to fish stocks. David Bray, a local crab and lobster

fisherman and secretary of the Welsh Coastal Inshore Fishermen's Association, said: "So much oil and chemical dispersant has now gone into the sea that we must be fearful about the long-term effect on our livelihood." He added: "Local buyers say continental importers are already putting out the word that they do not want any more Welsh shellfish for the time being."

Oysters, cockles and mussels taken from the Milford Haven estuary are being analysed at the Ministry of Agriculture's directorate of fisheries research in Essex. Dr Peter Mathiessen, of the directorate, said: "We still have to see what our analysis shows, but it is certainly possible that fishing in the area will have to be halted."

Crabs and lobsters off the coast are worth £1.5 million a year. Carmarthen Bay is prized for its £2.5 million-a-year cockle industry. Welsh exports now fetch £1.5 million because of new markets in South Korea and China.

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Debidin: his dogs made people's lives a misery

Court tells man not to leave his 17 dogs

A MAN who owns 17 German shepherd dogs has been told that he must not leave them for more than an hour a day. A High Court judge also ruled yesterday that no more than five dogs could be let into the garden at any time.

The order was imposed on Andrew Debidin, a bankrupt businessman, by Mr Justice Bell, after Wokingham District Council told the court that Mr Debidin's neighbours were living in misery.

Mr Justice Bell ruled that the dogs had caused a statutory nuisance under the Environmental Protection Act. The council said Mr Debidin, of Three Mile Cross, Berkshire, was in breach of an undertaking made on December 19 last year to keep noise levels down.

However, Mr Justice Bell said he would not send Mr Debidin to prison because the breach of the ruling occurred on one day eight weeks ago. He said that a fine would also be inappropriate because Mr Debidin was bankrupt.

David Webber, an environmental health officer, said the dogs barking "unacceptably and extremely intrusive". One neighbour said: "Our summer was ruined. We had to move out of our bedroom because the noise was so loud."

Mr Debidin told the court he had been keeping his dogs under control and had reduced them from 30 to 17 over the years. Reducing their numbers further was difficult because people only wanted puppies and his dogs were too old to find new homes.

Car clamped in London side street marks start of campaign against licence dodgers

First victim's luck runs out 6 months after his road tax

By JONATHAN PRYNN, TRANSPORT CORRESPONDENT, AND OLIVER AUGUST

A BLUE Ford Fiesta entered the history books shortly before 11am yesterday when it became the first car in Britain to be clamped for displaying an out-of-date tax disc.

There was a sense of achievement among the team from the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) as they applied the wheel clamp to the nine-year-old car near Wandsworth Bridge in south-west London. Its tax disc had run out last August.

Malcolm Mason, a DVLA tax enforcement officer, spotted the first potential victim of the crackdown on tax evasion parked in Hamble Street, a quiet residential road.

A quick telephone check against the DVLA database confirmed that no tax had been paid for six months. By keying in the details on a hand-held computer, Mr Mason alerted the DVLA clamping van, which was waiting discreetly round the corner to avoid alerting the car's owner.

The electronics worked without a hitch, except when Mr Mason's frozen fingers stabbed the wrong buttons on the computer keyboard. "It was so easy in training," he

muttered, as the computer printed out a ticket to stick on the car's windscreen.

Within minutes Darren Liddy, the clamping from Arcade Motors, the contractor working for the agency, had whipped out one of his DVLA-stamped immobilisers and attached it to the forlorn-looking Fiesta. The owner has to pay £68 to have it freed and faces having it towed away if the fee is not paid within 24 hours.

The only witnesses to the historic moment was a worried resident who popped his head briefly out into the freezing air to check the car was not his, and a passing pensioner, Len Matthews, 72, who wholeheartedly welcomed the initiative.

"About time too. I'm all for it," he said. "There are so many tax dodgers on the road, they deserve being done for it. Why should people like me who pay on time pay for them? If I missed paying by a day, knowing my luck, I would probably be one of the first to get clamped."

Haydn Madoc, the DVLA's project manager for the trial, anxiously shoed the clamping team away from the scene

as quickly as possible to avoid an embarrassing encounter with an irate owner.

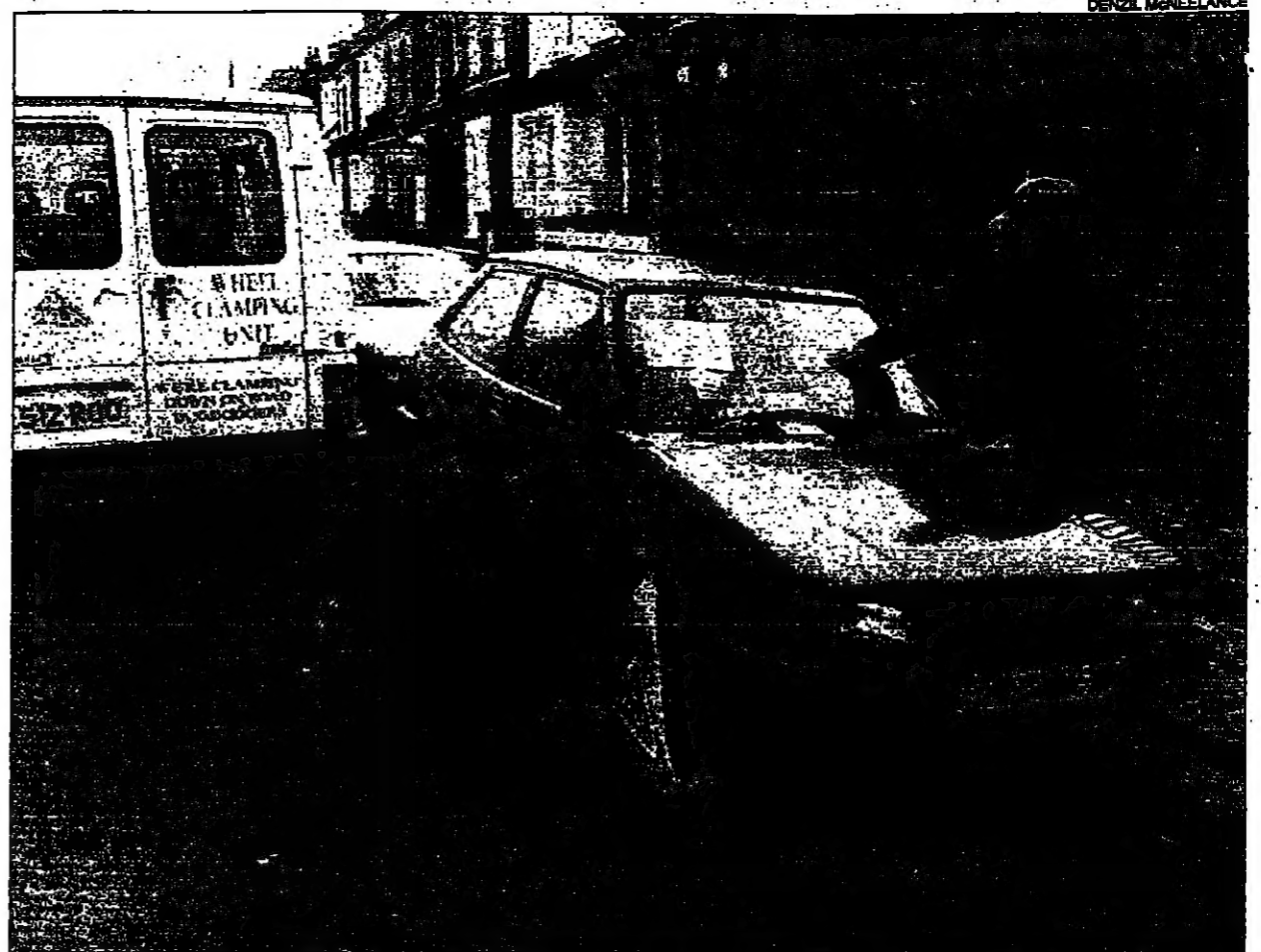
Local residents claimed the car belonged to a commuter who took advantage of the free parking in the street before catching a bus to central London.

Robert Wickens, 40, said: "It must be one of the people who drive here and then leave the car because it's too expensive to park where they work. They take up all the space and the residents have nowhere to park. Soon we are getting a residents' parking scheme, but then you have to pay £60 a year to park on your own street."

Maria Ambert, 52, said: "I sometimes see a man in a suit getting in and out of the Fiesta, either early in the morning or in the evening. But he doesn't live around here. There are lots of people parking round here who work in the City. They deserve to get clamped."

The historic first completed, the team moved on to victim number two, a silver Renault 25 with no tax disc and no record of payment within the past six months.

Although only a handful of



The clampers immobilising the Fiesta in southwest London yesterday. "About time too," said one resident

cars had been clamped by the end of the first day, the two vans that will be involved in the trial are capable of dealing with up to 50 vehicles a day. The number is expected to increase as the project gets fully into its stride. Mr Madoc was adamant that only the worst offenders would be clamped. "The main thing is getting out on the street and

produced a disc dated the day of the clamping would probably have their fee waived."

He said that although the clamping firm was being paid a fee for every car immobilised, the DVLA would always make the final decision about whether a car should be clamped. "The main thing is getting out on the street and

being seen on the street," he said.

Certain categories of car, including those owned by disabled drivers, doctors on call and diplomats will be spared, as well as cars over 25 years old, which no longer have to be taxed.

The three-month trial will initially concentrate on the

borough of Kensington and Chelsea but will also rove into the adjoining boroughs of Westminster, Wandsworth and Hammersmith and Fulham to stop drivers escaping justice by parking over the border. If successful, the scheme will be extended to other London boroughs later in the year.

Car-boot painting may fetch £18,000

By DALYA ALBERGE, ARTS CORRESPONDENT

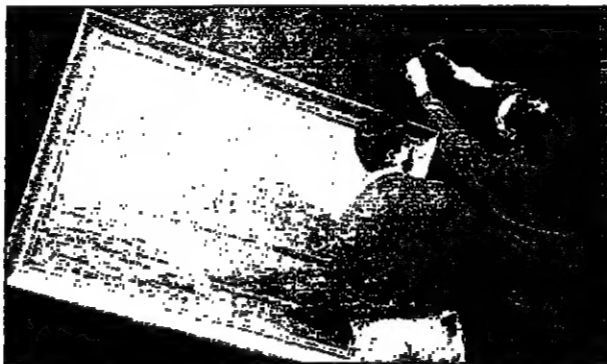
A VICTORIAN painting bought for £35 in a car-boot sale in west London seven years ago could fetch £18,000 for the man who spotted it.

The owner, a 44-year-old London carpet dealer who wishes to remain anonymous, noticed the canvas in the back of a Ford Transit van at the sale in Hounslow. He haggle for ten minutes, eventually knocking the price down from £50 to £35.

Eventually, he took it to be valued at Christie's. They

identified it as a view of St Michael's Mount in Cornwall by Benjamin Williams Leader (1831-1923). The owner said yesterday: "For once I was at a loss for words. I thought the painting might have been worth £400 or £500."

He goes to car-boot sales once or twice a year, looking for books. "The canvas at the sale was sticking out from a pile of furniture and other knick-knacks. I went to the library once to look it up and found nothing. I thought it



The view of St Michael's Mount, bought for £35

was another one of those unknown paintings."

Martin Beisly, Christie's director of Victorian pictures, said: "The vendor brought the picture in out of curiosity. I was delighted to be able to tell

him it was a lost work by Leader. It is very beautiful."

Leader was a highly rated Worcester landscape painter who exhibited at the Royal Academy of Arts in London between 1857 and 1922.

Chemical firm ordered to pay £500,000 for contamination

By A STAFF REPORTER

A CHEMICAL company was ordered yesterday to pay out almost £500,000 after failing to prevent toxic emissions contaminating an area of north Derbyshire.

Coalite Chemicals was fined £150,000 with £300,000 costs for leaking dioxins into the atmosphere from its plant in Bolsover, near Chesterfield, in 1990 and 1991.

The dioxins, chemical by-products linked with cancer, contaminated local people, farm animals and land,

Leicester Crown Court was told. Coalite admitted a charge under the Health and Safety at Work Act of failing to prevent the emissions, ending the biggest investigation by the Pollution Inspectorate.

The investigation discovered a link between emissions from the plant's incinerator and high dioxin levels in the immediate environment. The problem was caused by operatives burning waste at below the instructed 800C. The particles landed on cow pastures and entered the food chain.

Mr Justice Brooke said the

operatives of Coalite's incinerator had failed to comply with "very clear written instructions". But he added: "In my judgment it is not only the operatives and their supervisors who are to blame for what happened... I remain of the view that it is the management who are most seriously to blame for not ensuring that their staff knew why they were being instructed not to burn waste within 12 hours of starting up or at temperatures of less than 800C and for not having effective monitoring systems in place."

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Findings could lead to 'cure'

Scientists isolate cause of addiction to cigarette smoke

By Nigel Hawkes, Science Editor

CIGARETTES may cause addiction by suppressing the action of a key brain chemical, American scientists report today. They have found that the brains of smokers have about 40 per cent less of an enzyme called monoamine oxidase B (MAO-B) than do those of non-smokers or former smokers.

The enzyme's role is to break down dopamine, a signalling chemical that helps regulate mood, movement and the reinforcement of behaviour patterns. Lower levels of the enzyme mean higher levels of dopamine, to which smokers become accustomed.

The finding, reported in *Nature* by a team led by Dr Joanna Fowler of Brookhaven National Laboratory in upstate New York, may also explain why it is that smokers have a lower risk of Parkinson's disease. The symptoms of the disease are caused by a deficiency of dopamine, which is increased in smokers by the effect on MAO-B.

Lower levels of the enzyme have already been measured in the blood of smokers, but the Brookhaven team has shown that this is also true in the brain. They used positron emission tomography, a sensitive brain-scanning technique,

to measure the amounts of a radioactive tracer which binds to MAO-B.

Seven smokers and six non-smokers volunteered to have the tracer injected into their bloodstream. The quantities of the amount of MAO-B present; it was 40 per cent lower in smokers' brains.

If indeed it is the reduction of MAO-B that helps people to become addicted to smoking, the finding has a number of implications. One is that drugs that mimic the effect of smoking by depressing MAO-B could help smokers give up by producing the same "feel-good" effects in the first difficult weeks.

There is some confirmation of this in recent studies cited by the team showing that the drug moclobemide, which inhibits the closely related enzyme MAO-A, does help heavy smokers give up.

In a commentary in the same issue of the journal, two scientists unconnected with the Brookhaven team, Alexander Glassman of Columbia University and George Koob of the Scripps Research Institute, draw even more sweeping conclusions.

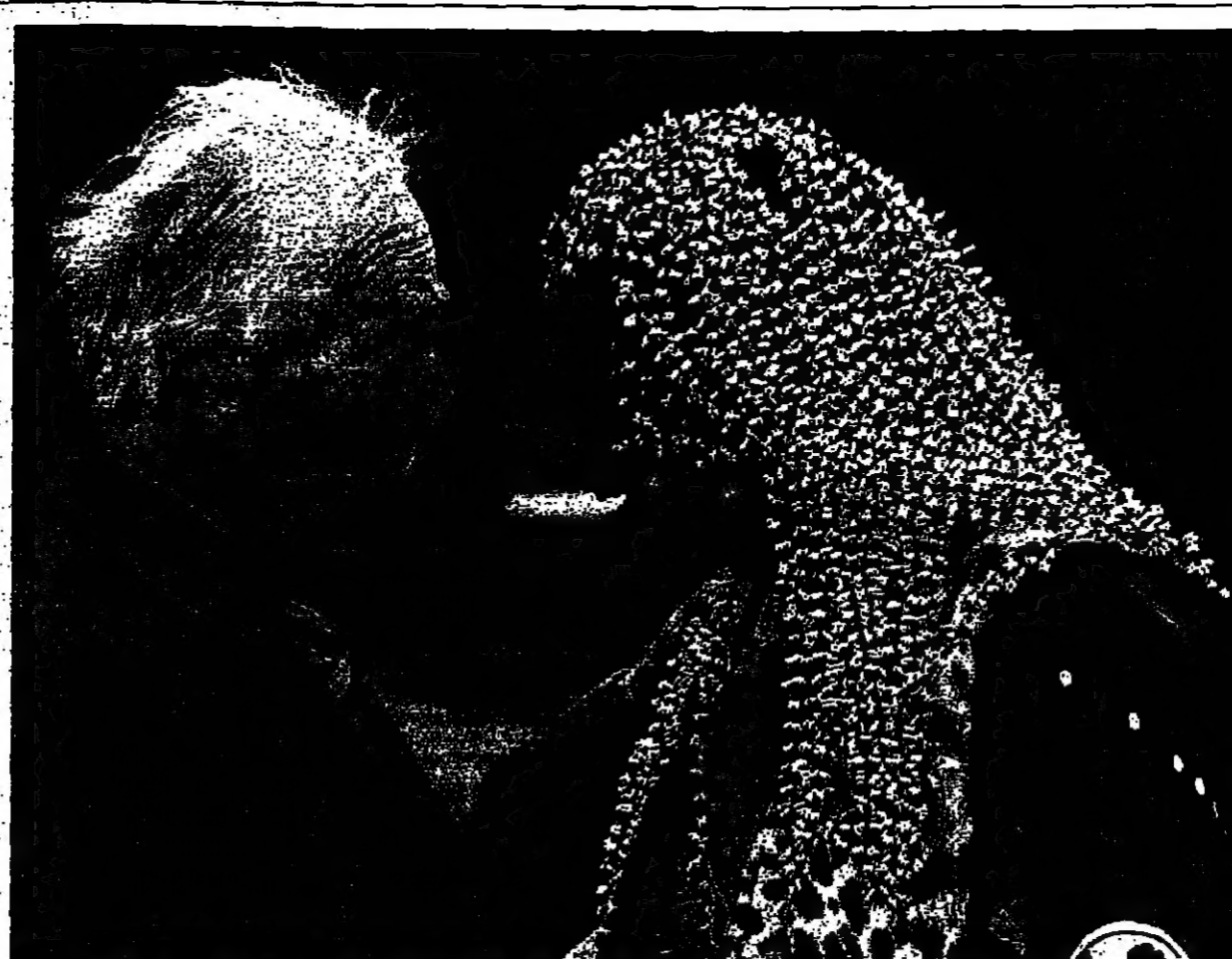
They say that the increase of

dopamine in smokers may explain why they are more alert and perform better in some tests of mental ability. They also say that the inhibition of the enzyme may be the reason why cigarettes are often a "gateway" drug.

Dopamine plays a key role in reward signalling and addiction, they say. Almost all drugs of addiction, including cocaine, amphetamines, heroin, alcohol and nicotine, provide their "lift" through the dopamine signalling system. "If dopamine availability is significantly altered by MAO-B inhibition, this could influence the vulnerability of an individual to various aspects of addiction."

For example, studies show that smokers are more likely than non-smokers to become alcoholics, or addicted to other drugs. The inhibition of MAO-B could explain this gateway role, they say, and if so "it would raise even further the concern about adolescent exposure to cigarettes."

The ingredient in the smoke that causes these actions is at present unknown, but it is increasingly evident, the two scientists say, that nicotine is not the only psychoactive component of tobacco smoke.



Head to head: Chief Goleka explains the urgency of his mission to Major-General Ian Robertson

Headhunter undeterred by Scots miss

By Stephen Farrell

A XHOSA witchdoctor's quest for his ancestor's skull took him on a spirit flight over a Highlands forest yesterday. Wearing a leopard skin and brandishing a fly whisk, Chief Nicholas Goleka arrived at The Highlanders regimental museum in Fort George to search for the head of his great-great uncle.

Greeted with a glass of whisky by

Major-General Ian Robertson, retired, the chief searched the museum fruitlessly for the skull of the warrior chieftain King Hintsa. He claims King Hintsa was killed by the Highlanders in May 1835, when he tried to escape during the Sixth Frontier War.

Colonel Murdo MacDonald said that only King Hintsa's ears, not his skull, had been removed and he was killed by George Southey, of the Corps of Guides, not the 72nd Highlanders. He was

decapitated by Southey's brother William. "The head of the king is not in the museum, nor has it ever been," he said.

Chief Goleka, from Butterworth in the Eastern Cape, emerged to claim the skull was buried near a forest near by. "I saw a pony in my dream and when I went to that place today it ran to me," he said. "It is the pony I saw in my dream and it will guide me to the skull. The spirits will come to me again tonight and then I will find it."

Driver is remanded in Celine murder

A self-employed lorry driver appeared before magistrates at Redditch, Hereford and Worcester, yesterday, charged with murdering the French accountancy student Celine Figard between December 18 and 30 last year. Stuart Morgan, 36, of Poole, Dorset, was remanded in custody for a week.

Ms Figard was last seen alive at the Chiveley service station on the M4 in Berkshire. Her body was found in a layby near Worcester ten days later. She had been strangled.

Gatting apology

The cricketer Mike Gatting received an apology and undisclosed damages in the High Court over an allegation in a book by Ivo Tennant, published by Cassel, that he epitomised the outlook of a racially prejudiced Englishman.

Carey for TUC

Dr George Carey will become the first Archbishop of Canterbury to address the TUC's annual conference when he speaks to delegates at next year's gathering. A venue for the congress has yet to be agreed.

Paisley funeral

The world of football paid its last respects to Bob Paisley, the former Liverpool manager who died last Wednesday at the age of 77. Current and former players of many clubs attended the funeral service at Woolton, near his home.

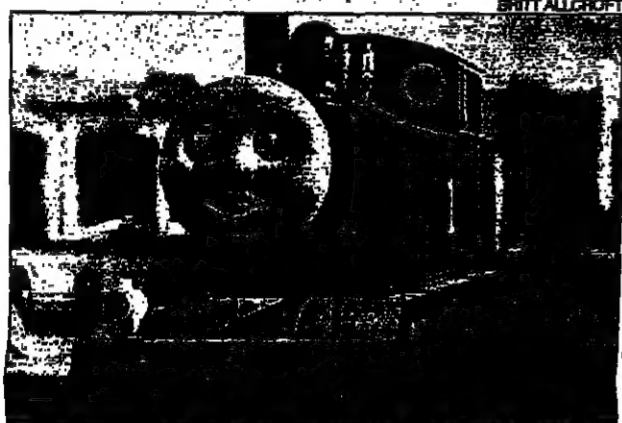
Sea crash deal

Survivors of the Cormorant Alpha helicopter crash in the North Sea in 1992, in which 11 people died, have reached out-of-court settlements with Shell and Esso. Lawyers for the companies and 53 claimants refused to discuss detail.

Aston debut

A new 150mph Aston Martin will make its debut at the Geneva Motor Show next month. The £139,000 V8 Coupé has a new 5.3 litre engine and can reach 60mph in six seconds. The first cars should be with customers by the end of May.

Thomas makes tracks for a fat-free run along Hollywood lines



Thomas as British television viewers know him

By Aleksandra Ffran, Media Correspondent

THOMAS the Tank Engine, the cheery storybook hero of the British steam-train era, is taking a branch line to Hollywood via small-town America. Paramount studios has signed the blue engine and his friends Percy, Henry, James, Gordon and the Fat Controller for their feature film debut.

Brit. Allcroft, whose television adaptation of the Rev W Awdry's 1940s railway series has brought Thomas new fame, said yesterday that she would be writing and produc-

ing the film, *Thomas and the Magic Railroad*, and there would be minor alterations to the characters within the spirit of the original. In the American version of the TV series, the Fat Controller already goes by the less "fatist" name of Sir Topham Hat.

Ms Allcroft said the film would combine the animated characters with live characters from *Shining Time Station*, a children's series that her company makes for American television. It is about a small-town railroad community in the mythical Indian Valley and stars the comedy actor

George Carling, who is expected to appear in the film.

"We are very excited by this wonderful opportunity to put a story onto the big screen that we hope children and grown-ups will enjoy and remember," she said. Ringo Starr, who provided the voiceover for the first television series in Britain, is not expected to participate.

The film will be shot in Britain's Shepperton Studios and the United States for release in 1997.

Thomas the Tank Engine first appeared in 1945, after Mr Awdry created him to

amuse his son, Christopher, who had measles. Sales of the books remained steady until the early 1980s, when Ms Allcroft adapted the stories for television.

The series became a hit in 20 countries, with a particularly big following in America and Japan. Merchandising spin-offs, including a bedroom collection, clothing, toothbrushes and mugs, turned Thomas into a huge industry. Last year he earned gross licensing revenues of £12 billion.

Mr Awdry, 84, has criticised the television series — describ-

ing parts of it as "rubbish" and lamenting its "ignorance of railway practice" — but his family is understood to have earned an estimated £7 million from Thomas's international popularity.

□ The British charity premiere of the film *Broken Arrow* — starring John Travolta and Christian Slater as Stealth bomber pilots caught up in a conspiracy to steal nuclear missiles — is to be held next month at a multiplex cinema in Bury, Greater Manchester, and hosted by the Manchester United football team.

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UN fears Iraq may build missiles that can reach Britain

FROM JAMES BONE IN NEW YORK

THE United Nations fears that Iraq may be trying to develop a long-range missile that could propel biological and chemical warheads as far as Britain.

UN weapons inspectors have launched an investigation after the discovery of gyroscopes from Russian-made intercontinental missiles, and Iraq's admission that its missile programme was much more extensive than previously known.

Iraq, now prohibited from possessing missiles that can fly further than about 94 miles, revealed last autumn that before the Gulf War it had been working on a new generation of missile engine with a range of 1,875 miles.

Particularly disturbing was the fact that the new missile's projected payload was a mere 440lb, militarily insignificant if packed with high explosives, but of about the size of the biological warheads that Iraq is known to have assembled on the eve of the Gulf War.

Suspicious that Iraq may have revived the programme were aroused by the intercep-

tion of 115 sophisticated gyroscopes being shipped to Iraq through Jordan in November, and the subsequent discovery of more sophisticated gyroscopes at the bottom of the Tigris Canal just outside Baghdad.

Western officials say the gyroscopes are of the type used in Russia's SSN19 submarine-launched intercontinental ballistic missile, each of which contains three such devices. The gyroscopes, which can guide a missile for up to 5,000 miles, were apparently sold on the black market after being taken from SSN19s dismantled under the Start treaty.

Caught, re-labeled, Iraq claimed the gyroscopes were imported by mistake and that it was actually seeking parts for its permitted short-range missile programme. But UN inspectors have alerted the Security Council that Iraq may be continuing to try to develop a long-range missile.

In his latest report last December, Rolf Ekeus, the chief UN weapons inspector, wrote: "There is evidence that this acquisition is for long-range missiles and thus fur-

ther indicates continued activities in Iraq in the area of prohibited missiles."

Iraq has admitted that it has conducted at least one covert missile programme since the Gulf War, despite UN monitoring, attempting to convert Soviet-made SA2 surface-to-air missiles into a ground-to-ground missile with a range of 187 to 313 miles.

Security Council members are now eagerly awaiting the outcome of the UN investigation into Iraq's long-range missile programme.

Iraq has yet to account for 14,965 pints of anthrax it says it produced in the run-up to the Gulf War, and a missile with a range of 1,875 miles could put almost all of Europe under threat of a devastating biological attack.

"That range would miss London, but not by much," said one Western official. "They would hit somewhere in the middle of the English Channel, but it would certainly bring Paris into range. It may get as far as the southeast corner of Britain - the Kent coastline."

Washington: Ukraine has been accused of selling or leasing Antonov aircraft to Colombia's notorious drug cartels. The report comes as President Kuchma arrived for a three-day visit during which he will meet President Clinton and senior White House officials. Kiev, Ukraine's capital, has denied the report. But the State Department said: "Obviously the report is disturbing. It is expected to be raised with Mr Kuchma. (AP)



Serbs flee Sarajevo

A Serb woman leaves the Sarajevo suburb of Vogosca yesterday as the Muslim-Croat Federation prepared to take it over from Bosnia's Serb Republic tomorrow under the Dayton peace

agreement. Tension rose in the Serb areas of Sarajevo last night and remained high in the divided Bosnian

city of Mostar as it took hesitant steps towards reunification. About 150 desperate Vogosca residents, many of

them weeping women, jammed a town meeting room to demand help from United Nations police, fearing reprisals for the 43-month Serb siege of Sarajevo. (Reuters)

Black pupils run sjambok gauntlet

FROM INIGO GILMORE IN JOHANNESBURG

HUNDREDS of black pupils marched through a small Orange Free State town yesterday after clashes with whites in another violent encounter over admission to formerly whites-only schools. On Tuesday, about 400 black pupils rampaged through Trompsburg after

they were chased by a group of 20 white men armed with sjamboks and pickhandles. The children smashed windows and cars and set fire to a house.

The conflict began on Monday when black township pupils occupied the nearby Trompsburg Secondary School, saying they wanted access to empty classrooms. Henzie Serfontein, the school

principal, said parents of the 95 white children chased the blacks away because they were "fed up". Businesses in the town were reported to be closed and the streets deserted yesterday as pupils marched to a police station where they handed over a petition.

The incident occurred just days after a judge, in a landmark ruling, ordered a white primary school to admit

black pupils. Yesterday the judge, Tjibbe Spoelstra, quashed an appeal by the school in Potgietersrus, 160 miles north of Johannesburg, effectively forcing the school to open its doors to all. The dispute is set for a showdown today when Ngokoko Ramathodi, Premier of the Northern province, leads 16 children to the classrooms under a heavy police guard.



An SA2 surface-to-air missile on its launch pad

Song and dance for women in their 120s

FROM BEN MACINTYRE IN PARIS AND OUR FOREIGN STAFF

THE world's oldest person and France's least likely rap artist celebrated her 121st birthday yesterday with a champagne party and a cake ablaze with candles. Jeanne Calment entered *The Guinness Book of Records* last October as the oldest person still living. There have been other claimants to the title of oldest human being - Maria do Carmo Geronimo, a Brazilian who claims to be 124, is one of them - but only Mme Calment has birth records to prove her longevity.

This week, proving you are only as old as your taste in music, she released a compact disc, entitled *Mistress of Time*, on which she tells stories about her life in a background of funk-techno-rap music.

Mme Calment's birthday was celebrated at her nursing home near Arles, the southern French town where she was born on February 21, 1875. In Rio de Janeiro, Senhora Geronimo found a fitting role for a woman who claims to be the world's oldest person: roughly a



Jeanne Calment proclaims her age in Arles and, half a world away, Maria do Carmo Geronimo rides a Rio carnival float on her birthday

century after her release from slavery, she rode on a carnival float dressed as the granddaughter of an historic Brazilian slave revolt leader.

Propelled on top of the red-and-gold float that carried her through Rio's Sambadrome, she portrayed a mythical African princess, Aqualume, whose grandson, Zumbi, led a slave revolt 300 years ago. Senhora Geronimo, surrounded by scantily-clad women, waved in the 90,000 singing and dancing spectators.

Suicide note on Internet

Sydney: An Australian boy triggered a four-hour police operation on both sides of the Pacific yesterday after he sent a message on the Internet saying that he was about to kill himself. (Roger Maynard writes)

The 14-year-old boy's suicide note, which identified him as a 26-year-old man armed with a gun, was intercepted by police in Redmond, Washington State. American officers alerted the police in Perth, Western Australia, who, after a process of elimination from vague clues provided, knocked on the door of a suburban home at 3.30am.

Two bleary-eyed parents opened the door. Inside, the boy was still at his personal computer. The police said they would not be charging the boy.

Crime pays well for young Americans

FROM QUENTIN LETTS IN NEW YORK

SOCIETY must apply market principles to crime prevention, according to a Harvard University economist with links to the Labour Party. Professor Richard Freeman found that the minimum wage was no match for the "starting wage" in the crime world.

Professor Freeman, who two years ago addressed a Labour economic summit in London, said the \$4.25 (£2.75) minimum hourly wage was less than half what a young man can earn in the early stages of a career as a thief. He proposed government action to raise young employees' remuneration to \$10 (£6.50) an hour, with tax breaks for employers.

More than half the mini-

mum wage earners in America are under 25, and Professor Freeman noted that the bulk of people who turn to crime are young, less-skilled men. "Researchers went out and asked young people 'at what wage would you give up crime,'" he said. "The answers were all roughly in the same ball park. Two years ago it was \$8 an hour. Now it is \$10. The solution to crime is either to lock people up, which costs a fortune, or to get more pay to people."

At present, he said, the young person facing a choice between a career in work or a career in crime "has nothing to lose" by choosing the latter. Crime simply pays better, added the professor.

WORLD SUMMARY

Tibetan captives escape

Hong Kong: Ten Tibetan prisoners being moved between jails escaped last month and their Chinese guard-driver was killed, according to reports (Jonathan Mirsky writes).

The driver may have died when his lorry swerved into a river after the prisoners threw chilli powder into his eyes. Four of the prisoners were monks, sentenced to three years for publicly condemning Peking's designation last year of a six-year-old boy as the eleventh incarnation of the Panchen Lama. Tibet's second highest lama, The Chinese barred the Dalai Lama's own choice, who has since disappeared with his family.

Rifkind names envoy to Tirana

Tirana: Malcolm Rifkind announced the appointment of the first Ambassador to serve in Albania, and won immediate praise from President Berisha (Michael Binyon writes). Making his first visit to Europe's most impoverished and formerly most isolated country, the Foreign Secretary said that Andrew Tesoriere, the chargé d'affaires, had been promoted to full Ambassador after a freeze lasting 45 years.

Detectives seize minister's papers

Johannesburg: Fraud squad detectives have seized documents from the home and offices of Ake Williams, 56, the South African Welfare and Population Development Minister. In a case relating to alleged favouritism in the granting of tenders to pension companies (Inigo Gilmore writes), Mr Williams is a Coloured member of the National Party.

Australia gets euthanasia law

Sydney: Australia's Northern Territory has passed what is believed to be the world's first law allowing terminally ill adults to ask doctors to end their lives. The Bill was first mooted by Marshall Perron, then Chief Minister, after his mother's death in 1994. He resigned to allow party members a free vote. (Reuters)

Defection move

Seoul: In an attempt to prevent embarrassing defections, North Korea is ordering the children of senior officials posted abroad to return home, reports in the South Korean capital said. (AP)

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New Hampshire win for coalition of conservatives, insecure workers and angry outsiders threatens

'Peasants' revolt' hands Buchanan the party crown

FROM MARTIN FLETCHER IN MANCHESTER, NEW HAMPSHIRE

REPUBLICANS were in a state of shock and turmoil yesterday after Pat Buchanan's sensational victory over Robert Dole, the Senate leader, in Tuesday's New Hampshire primary.

Lamar Alexander, the former Tennessee Governor who finished a surprisingly strong third, demanded that Mr Dole should quit the presidential race so that mainstream Republicans could unite behind his own candidacy and defeat Mr Buchanan's protectionist and isolationist populism.

Mr Dole, although badly wounded, sought to ignore Mr Alexander, claiming that he was now in a two-man battle with Mr Buchanan for "the heart and the soul of the Republican Party" and calling it a "race between the mainstream and the extreme".

Mr Buchanan, delighted by the triumph of his "peasants' revolt", called on the party establishment to "behave like adults" and accept the people's verdict. "It's clear Pat Buchanan represents working class

REPUBLICAN DELEGATES ELECTED SO FAR

Alexander	29
Buchanan	28
Dole	16
Forbes	5
Gramm	5
Others	3

There are 1,990 delegates to the August 12-15 convention in San Diego, California, who will choose the Republican nominee.

voters. I can bring them back... We can put together a coalition that can beat Bill Clinton," he said.

New Hampshire exit polls showed 38 per cent of voters would have backed Colin Powell had he been a candidate. As a result, yesterday saw a new surge of speculation over whether or not the retired general could now be persuaded to run to save the party. Friends insisted that he was not interested, and there is in any case no mechanism for him now to enter the contest.

Former Vice-President Dan

Quayle said the race was now a "free-for-all" that would last for weeks, and claimed his telephone had been "ringing off the hook" with friends pressing him to run. Commentators said the party had not been so divided since the conservative Barry Goldwater challenged Nelson Rockefeller's Eastern Establishment in 1964, and there was even talk of August seeing the first "brokered" nomination convention in nearly 50 years at which the party's candidate would be chosen in smoke-filled back rooms away from the public gaze.

President Clinton and his fellow Democrats were yesterday euphoric over the Republican disarray, which gives their party a sporting chance of both holding the White House and winning back Congress.

Mr Buchanan won 27 per cent of the vote, Mr Dole 26 and Mr Alexander 23 in the closest, costliest and ugliest New Hampshire primary ever. It was a humiliating defeat for the party's elder statesman, Mr Dole, 72, once enjoyed a 40 point lead in a tiny state where he had lost twice before. He had virtually the entire New Hampshire Republican establishment working for him and he spent millions to portray Mr Buchanan as a racist and extremist. But he still lost.

At a post-vote party he put a brave face on his defeat but was clearly devastated. "Now I know why they call this the Granite State - it's so hard to crack," he said before declaring war on Mr Buchanan. "Everyone who knows Bob Dole knows I'm a fighter," he said, reading from a prepared



Pat Buchanan in confident mood as he awaited the outcome of voting in the vital New Hampshire primary

statement. "We're not going to give up... In the next month we will decide if we are a party of fear or hope, whether we are a party that keeps people out or brings people in, whether we are angry about the present or optimistic about the future."

No Republican has ever won his party's nomination without first carrying New Hampshire, but Mr Dole may still do so. Apart from having much more campaign cash

than his rivals, he has 24 of the nation's 31 Republican governors in his camp and formidable organisations in key states. But the danger is that many mainstream Republicans will now desert to the younger, more vibrant Mr Alexander, who constantly argued on television yesterday that only he could defeat "Buchananism" this spring and President Clinton in the autumn.

As Mr Alexander said: "All the king's men and all the king's horses failed to save Mr Dole. Why doesn't Senator Dole step aside and let me take on Mr Buchanan? My fresh ideas against his wrong ideas would make a very good race," he added.

There is no way the Republican Party can now deny Mr Buchanan a prime speaking slot at its August convention, even though his incendiary rhetoric at the 1992 convention cost the party dearly in the presidential election.

Washington: President Clinton won 95 per cent of the vote in the Democratic primary, which the White House said was a modern record for a serving President without significant opposition. President Reagan, by comparison, received only 86 per cent in the 1984 New Hampshire Republican primary when he was unopposed. (Reuters)

William Rees-Mogg, page 18
Leading article, page 19

Anxieties of angry workers exploited

FROM IAN BRODIE IN WASHINGTON

PAT BUCHANAN compared his supporters to peasants with pitchforks storming the knights in the castle, but in reality the average Buchanan voter is white, working-class and angry.

Exit polls among Republicans in the New Hampshire primary, where Mr Buchanan was the narrow winner, showed that he had tapped into veins of anxiety about jobs being lost overseas and a culture losing its traditional values.

"Don't people get it?" asked Mary Powers, a retired librarian in New Hampshire, expressing exasperation at the smug attitude of other Republicans towards Mr Buchanan's populist message. "We like what he says and what he stands for. Why is everybody always surprised by that?"

About 30 per cent of the men who voted went for Mr Buchanan as did a quarter of the women. Exit polls found that Mr Buchanan did better than all his main opponents among voters without college degrees. He captured a third of those with incomes under \$30,000 (£19,300) and another third earning between \$30,000 and \$50,000. He took more than half the voters who described themselves as conservative, as well as those who placed a high priority on a candidate's conservative values. Those portraying themselves as moderate or somewhat liberal understandably shied away from Mr Buchanan, dividing their loyalties between Robert Dole and Lamar Alexander.

Not surprisingly, Mr Buchanan garnered two-thirds of those who support the Republican Party's stance against legalised abortion and only 15 per cent of those who are pro-choice. The next most important issue for a majority of Buchanan voters was his pledge to prevent American jobs being lost overseas.

Pollsters had "sounded" a warning that the electorate in New Hampshire was volatile, but most of Mr Buchanan's supporters had established their loyalty to him in advance. Fewer than one in five opted for him at the last minute, as against a third of Mr Dole's voters and almost as many for Mr Alexander.

Voters liked Mr Buchanan's often exaggerated rhetoric. "Even if you don't agree with some of his views, he's passionate and takes a stand on issues," said Peter Hutchins, a New Hampshire lawyer. "The other guys waffle all over the place."

THE NEXT STAGE OF THE REPUBLICAN CAMPAIGN

Primaries and caucuses in the next month

February 24	Delaware (P)
February 27	Arizona (P), North Dakota (P), South Dakota (P)
March 2	South Carolina (P)
March 3	Puerto Rico (P)
March 5	Minnesota (C), Colorado (P), Connecticut (P), Georgia (P), Maine (P), Maryland (P), Massachusetts (P), Rhode Island (P), Vermont (P)
March 7	New York (P)
March 12	Florida (P), Mississippi (P), Oklahoma (P), Oregon (P), Tennessee (P), Texas (P)
March 19	Illinois (P), Michigan (P), Ohio (P), Wisconsin (P)
March 26	California (P), Nevada (P), Washington (P)

Key: Primaries (P), Caucus (C)

Outraged opponents pursue front-runner along trail of rhetoric

BY IAN BRODIE

WITH his loose tongue, ready quips, many years of columns, television commentaries and stumping for votes, Pat Buchanan has left a trail of inflammatory rhetoric that is returning to haunt him.

His words have given rise to charges by other Americans that he is anti-Semitic, racist, sexist and anti-homosexual. As long as he remains front-runner for the Republican presidential nomination, the criticism is likely to increase. With pressure for him to explain himself. Even in orderly New Hampshire, the police had to be called when

Jewish activists exchanged taunts with Buchanan supporters and branded him a racist lacking only a Ku Klux Klan uniform. Far uglier demonstrations can be envisaged when the campaign reaches such cities as New York.

As an admitted political braver and master of fiery polemic, Mr Buchanan is well aware of his power to infuriate and alienate. He knows, too, that many supporters agree with him.

Although he disavowed white supremacists, his denials often fail to carry conviction. For example, he once described Congress as "Israel-

6 Rail as they will against discrimination, women are simply not endowed by nature with the same measure of single-minded ambition?

occupied territory", a reference to the powerful Jewish lobby. When challenged, Mr Buchanan, a committed Roman Catholic, said: "That's a witty, irrelevant line. What's wrong with it?"

He once described Hitler as racist and anti-Semitic to the core, but also "an individual of great courage, a soldier's soldier" and "a political organiser of the first rank". Of working women, he said:

"Rail as they will against discrimination, women are simply not endowed by nature with the same measure of single-minded ambition and the will to succeed in the fiercely competitive world of Western capitalism."

He is pitiless about homosexuals and AIDS. "They have declared war on nature and now nature is exacting an awful retribution," he said. AIDS victims, in his view, are

not victims of society, but have "killed themselves because they would not or could not control their suicidal appetites". Mr Buchanan announced in New Hampshire that, if elected, he would have no homosexuals in his Administration. Asked about blacks, he said: "I wouldn't rule it out."

He rubs his racist views with warnings about immigration. He once posed the question: "If we had to take in a million immigrants, say, Zulus, six years, or Englishmen, and put them in Virginia, what group would be easier to assimilate and would cause less problems for the people of Virginia?"

He voices religious views seldom heard even inside an American church. "Our culture is superior because our religion is Christianity," he has said. "I believe it's superior to Buddhism and Taoism and other faiths."

Mr Buchanan's comments about Israel and Jews have generated the most hostility towards him. Arguing against the Gulf War, he said: "There are only two groups that are beating the drums for war in the Middle East - the Israeli Defence Ministry and its amen corner in the United States."

During the subsequent row, Mr Buchanan refused to retract, insisting that legitimate criticism of Israel did not make him an anti-Semite. But he did seem insensitive to Jewish feelings when he wrote that those doing the fighting would be "kids with names like McAllister, Murphy, Gonzales and Leroy Brown". He has also campaigned against alleged Nazi war criminals being deported from America to face trial.



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SPORT 39-44

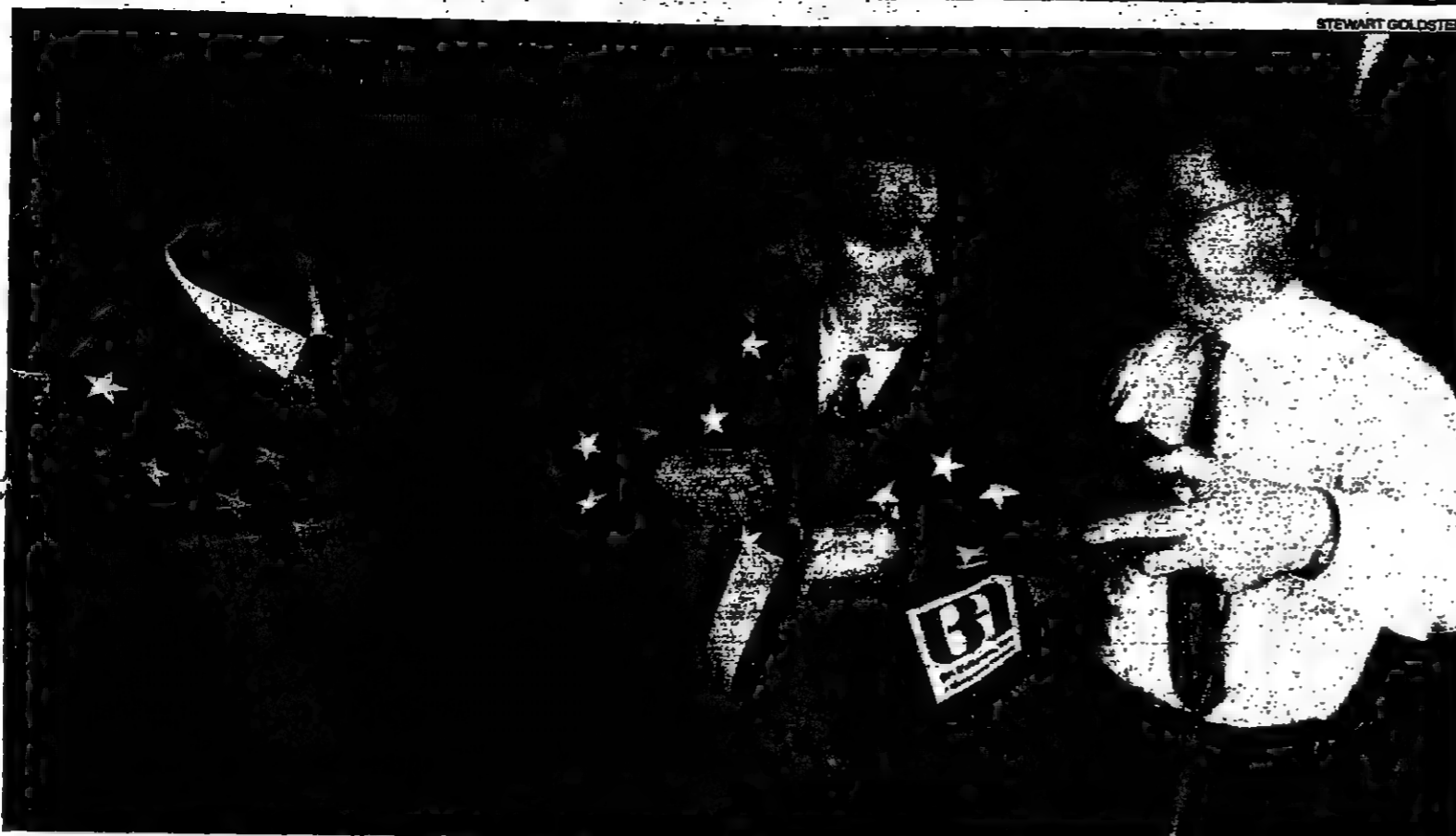
Lara eclipsed as ruthless India thrash West Indies

NATIONAL TRAINING AWARDS
See section 3

THE TIMES

BUSINESS EDITOR Lindsay Cook

THURSDAY FEBRUARY 22 1996



Derek Loveday, a tailor, puts the finishing touches on Bob Leonard's Stars and Stripes jacket that makes up the new fashion line adopted by BA Futures, the London futures and options trading arm of Bank of America. The jackets should help BA's 18 traders to stand out in the Liffie floor

US utility holds talks on bid for nuclear industry

By CHRISTINE BUCKLEY and PHILIP BASSETT

THE Government is engaged in talks about a trade sale of the nuclear industry but could pull the float at any time right up until the pricing of the issue.

Tim Eggar, the industry and Energy Minister, said yesterday that preliminary and indirect talks with Duke Power, a US utility that operates three nuclear reactors, had reached the stage of merchant bank negotiations. He indicated that there may be other potential bidders.

Mr Eggar said the flotation, due to take place in the summer and to be marketed to potential investors next month by BZW, the Department of Trade and Industry's advisers, was not unstoppable. "We can pull the float at any stage up to

the pricing of the issue," GEC has been suggested by some sources as a possible buyer, although the company is understood to be uninterested in its present form in British Energy, the holding company for Nuclear Electric and Scottish Nuclear, but is monitoring the situation.

Duke Power said it was not happy with the price being mooted. British Energy has been forecast to achieve a price tag of £2.5 billion in a flotation, less than the £2.9 billion cost of building Sizewell B, and could be construed as a giveaway and politically embarrassing. But a Duke Power spokesman, who said third-party talks had been conducted through Schroders, commented: "If the price was very

attractive we would be interested but a lot of dollars would have to be shed."

Labour rounded on the Government, saying that consideration of a trade sale — after the DTI had said only weeks ago that it had received no approaches — was an admission that the privatisation was expected to fetch a poor price on the market.

John Battle, the party's energy spokesman, said: "Ministers have got it half right — they should call the flotation off because, as today's Trade and Industry Select Committee report shows, nuclear privatisation doesn't add up. But the alternative to a flotation must not be a closing-down sale, with Britain's nuclear assets sold off abroad to raise

a fast buck for Tory election takings."

A big drag on any form of disposal of the nuclear industry is the £8 billion liabilities the business will carry for disposal of waste and decommissioning plants at the end of their lives. The select committee said that the nuclear industry would need a "miracle" to find a buyer if the Government maintained its policy of any purchaser taking over the liabilities.

The committee made clear that, in line with ministerial pronouncements, it recommended that any buyer or buyers of British Energy should take on its liabilities — though MPs privately accept that if that is the case, a sale is highly unlikely.

In its report on the industry, the committee agreed: "We strongly recommend that, whatever the level of liabilities, the liabilities should follow the assets from which they arose." Urging the Government to establish "more reliable" arrangements for the discharge of long-term liabilities after the closure of nuclear stations, MPs said that if the Government maintained its principle of liabilities following the assets then the sale could be jeopardised.

Martin O'Neill, the committee's chairman, said: "The Government has a long way to go before questions on the privatisation of the nuclear industry are fully answered."

Pennington, page 25

Drop in retail sales sparks talk of fresh cut in rates

By ALASDAIR MURRAY

AN UNEXPECTED slide in January retail sales has fuelled speculation that the Government will make a further cut in interest rates next month.

Retail sales fell 0.6 per cent last month in contrast to forecasts that had suggested a rise of 0.2 per cent. The scope for a rate cut was further underlined by the revelation that Eddie George, Governor of the Bank of England, had only opposed the timing and not the principle of January's quarter-point rate cut. He next meets Kenneth Clarke, the Chancellor, on March 7.

A clutch of other economic data and the Bank of England's quarterly inflation report have also lent support to the view that inflationary pressures remain weak. Ian Shepherdson, UK economist at HSBC, said: "Any objections to a cut in interest rates as early as next month have been swept away by the last few sets of figures. Coupled with the signs of slowdown abroad, there is an overwhelming economic case to cut rates."

The gloomy outlook on the high street in January was blamed on the poor weather and the lottery, which claimed an extra £100 million in consumer spending due to the statistical freak of two double roll-overs in the month. The decline came despite drastic high street price cutting in the January sales.

December sales were also revised downwards to show monthly growth of just 0.1 per cent as opposed to the 0.4 per cent reported last month.

Sales in clothing, which fell by 1.2 per cent, and household goods, which declined by 1.9 per cent, were hit hardest. But the annual figures showed

modest growth in retail spending, with sales in January up 2.3 per cent on January 1995. Sales over the three months from November rose 1.8 per cent on the same quarter in the previous year.

Ruth Parkhouse, an assistant director at the British Retail Consortium, said: "Consumers are not being lavish but we are seeing a modest pick-up in spending. This will be helped by the effect of interest rate cuts and tax cuts filtering through in the spring."

The publication yesterday of the minutes of the meeting between Mr Clarke and Mr George ended City speculation that there had been a serious disagreement between the Bank and Government over the rate cut to 6.25 per cent on January 18.

Mr George argued that the case for a cut in interest rates was "narrow" and that delaying a cut would ensure monetary credibility was preserved, but insisted he was "not seriously opposed" to the policy. The minutes also reveal that a great deal of debate centred on the need to employ smaller but more frequent rate cuts in a low inflation environment. The Bank has softened its line on inflation in recent months, with its quarterly report, published last week, concluding that inflation was likely to be less than 2.5 per cent two years from now.

The report also concluded that growth is fragile. Other important inflationary indicators, such as earnings growth, have remained flat, with only the M4 statistics showing worrying growth, the Government and the Bank attributing that to a statistical blip.

Pennington, page 25

BUSINESS TODAY

FT-SE 100	3725.6	(+11.0)
Yield	3.25%	(+0.01%)
FT-SE All-Share	1538.15	(+4.03)
Nickel	20372.23	(-282.44)
New York		
Dow Jones	8514.16	(+55.83)*
S&P Composite	646.65	(+6.00)*

Federal Funds	5.5%	(5.5%)
Long Bond	6.5%	(6.5%)
Yield	6.35%	(6.35%)

3-month Interbank	6.75%	(6.75%)
Life long gilts	10.7%	(10.7%)

New York		
\$	1.5433*	(1.5460)
London		
£	1.5433*	(1.5448)
DM	2.2415*	(2.2443)
FF	7.7230	(7.7325)
¥	1.8296	(1.8279)
¥	162.23	(163.30)
£ Index	83.7	(84.0)

London		
DM	1.4833*	(1.4875)
FF	6.7110*	(6.7110)
¥	1.1868*	(1.1790)
¥	162.23	(163.30)
£ Index	83.7	(84.0)

Tokyo close Yen 108.08		
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Short 15-day (May)	917.50	(917.20)
London close	6397.15	(6402.30)

* denotes midday trading price

Tecs blow

A House of Commons committee declared yesterday that the Government's Training and Enterprise Councils had made only a modest contribution to improved training in Britain. The Commons Employment Select Committee was "alarmed" at the way Tecs spend £1.7 billion of public money. Page 28

Chill damage

Household insurance premiums may rise this year as insurers try to cope with damage claims from the severe winter weather. Page 24

Halifax closures prompt warning

By ROBERT MILLER

A LEADING finance union yesterday claimed that mergers among banks and building societies could bring a further 10,000 job losses by the end of the decade after the Halifax Building Society announced that it is to close 120 branches.

The Banking, Insurance and Finance Union (Bifu), said: "The rush by building societies to merge and become just like banks will mean fewer jobs and less customer choice. It will also mean control of those societies being handed from customers to the big shareholders of the City of London."

The 120 Halifax branch closures are in addition to 42 last August after the merger of the Halifax and Leeds building societies. The Halifax, which said that there would be no

compulsory redundancies, plans to become a stock market company next year.

Bifu said: "It's sad, but the job losses at the Halifax are what we predicted. It also underlines our fear for the future of TSB branches following the Lloyds takeover, where we believe another 10,000 jobs are at risk."

Barclays Bank last night confirmed that 90 jobs would be affected by the closure of three of its cash centres.

The Labour MP Derek Fatchett (Leeds Central) and Alice Mahon (Halifax) said yesterday's announcement showed that past assurances on job losses after the Halifax/Leeds merger "had no validity".

Pennington, page 25

Banks back identity card concept

BRITISH banks support the concept of an identity card scheme. They say it would make it easier for people to open bank accounts (Patricia Tehan writes).

In evidence to the Home Affairs Select Committee, the British Bankers' Association said it supported the principle and believed "the time is right". The BBA said the more widely an identity card was held, the more likely it would be used and "a compulsory scheme might be preferable". The Government is expected to propose a voluntary scheme this year.

Sue Thornhill, BBA assistant director, said the opening of bank accounts are currently being denied to some people who cannot verify their identity.

Pennington, page 25

Names awarded £9.5m damages

By SARAH BAGNALL

STEPHEN MERRETT, a former deputy chairman at Lloyd's of London, has six weeks to raise £500,000 as part of a £9.5 million court award made yesterday to a group of loss-making names.

The award is the first instalment of an estimated £300 million in compensation for losses incurred by 1992 litigating names on Merrett syndicate 418. Last November the vast majority of the names won a high court action against the syndicate's auditor Ernst & Whinney, now part of Ernst & Young. Mr Merrett, the syndicate's underwriter, his agency, the Merrett Underwriting Agency, and about 60 members' agents.

Each defendant is jointly and severally liable for any

compensation, the final level of which still has to be decided. If Mr Merrett or his agency fail to pay their share of the damages award, the burden will shift to E&Y. E&Y believes the final damages would be significantly less than £300 million and that its share could be as low as £15 million. John Mays, chairman of the Merrett action group, said E&Y could face a bill of as much as £150 million.

Mr Justice Cresswell yesterday agreed to the interim payment and said that a further award would be decided in the spring based on the claims paid by the syndicate.

Meanwhile, Chaset, the Lloyd's analyst, predicted that Lloyd's would announce a £1 billion profit this summer.

Gehe raises offer for Lloyds Chemists

By SARAH BAGNALL

Gehe of Germany yesterday raised its offer for Lloyds Chemists to £650 million, while UniChem, a rival bidder, launched a dawn raid on the market, buying a 10 per cent stake in its target.

Gehe, Europe's largest drugs wholesaler, lifted its cash offer after an earlier £584 million bid was trumped last week by an increased offer of £630 million from UniChem. The manoeuvrings are the latest in a string of offers and counter-offers by the two companies, that started in mid-January when UniChem launched a £544 million cash and share offer.

Both have now made two offers for Lloyds Chemists. However, only Gehe can raise its bid further. As a result of the

changes, Allen Lloyd, chairman of Lloyds Chemists, has seen the value of his holding leap from £38 million under UniChem's original offer to about £46 million under the terms of Gehe's latest offer.

Gehe has raised its offer from 450p in cash for every Lloyds Chemists share to 500p in cash. That compares to UniChem's offer of 920p in cash and 16 new shares for every ten Lloyds Chemists shares, which values the group at 491p a share.

Yesterday's news lifted Lloyds Chemists shares 2p to 491p, while UniChem's shares rose 7p to 249p. Dieter Kammerer, chairman of Gehe, said: "Our increased offer is more than generous and compares favourably with the final UniChem offer." This is especially true given the potential

risks that UniChem faces in integrating a group significantly larger than itself.

He also criticised UniChem's offer, claiming the company had no experience in making acquisitions of such a size and that it would be financially stretched by the deal. But Jeff Harris, UniChem's chief executive, rejected the claims, adding he was confident that its offer would win shareholders' approval.

Lloyds Chemists is Britain's second largest pharmacy chain with 924 outlets and a 30 per cent share of the UK drugs wholesale market. Gehe, which is majority-owned by Franz Haniel, a private company, entered the UK market last year with the £400 million acquisition of AAH.

Temps, page 26

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Two-speed ERM plan to ensure stability

FROM CHARLES BRENNER IN BRUSSELS

THE European Commission has drawn up proposals for a two-speed exchange-rate mechanism in an effort to ensure currency stability between the euro and currencies excluded from the single currency plan.

Outlines of a future arrangement based on the existing exchange-rate mechanism are emerging from studies by the Brussels Commission, the European Monetary Institute and the monetary committee of national treasury officials.

The scheme is deemed vital to the success of monetary union. It seeks to answer fears among likely EMU members and non-qualifying states over the risks of instability among excluded currencies after the launch of the euro on January 1, 1999.

Under proposals to the EU monetary committee, countries coming close to meeting the Maastricht criteria on convergence — the entrance test for EMU — but not joining the single currency, would submit to narrower bands than the 15 per cent range each side of a target value which operates at present.

The strong-currency countries, already labouring under the disadvantage of "competitive devaluation", see it as a way to protect themselves from further devaluations by weak currency countries, including Britain, Italy and Spain.

Alain Juppé, France's Prime Minister, has proposed making all EU payments to the non-EMU countries in their local currency to deprive them of profiting from exchange rate benefits.

But Britain is offering an alternative scheme that would focus on keeping inflation rates within fixed targets.

Weather threat to premiums casts cloud over CU record

BY MARIANNE CURPHEY

PERSONAL household premiums may rise this year as UK insurers cope with multi-million pound damage claims caused by the severe winter weather.

Commercial Union, which yesterday unveiled record pre-tax profits for the year to December 31, paid out £33 million for weather damage, most of it caused by the cold snap in the last week of 1995. More than £13 million went to compensate damage to domestic properties, while the rest was for commercial buildings. Subsidised claims were £26 million higher than in 1994.

Cees Schraauwers, general manager of CU's non-life products, said that the cost of household premiums depended on the weather over the rest of the winter, and on competition in the market.

This week, Guardian Royal Exchange revealed that it had set aside £25 million to pay for winter weather damage claims up to the end of last year. The industry as a whole is predicting a squeeze on margins.

Total pre-tax profit at CU was up 14 per cent, at £509 million, and life profits, accounting for 43 per cent of total premiums worldwide,



Peter Ward, an executive director, left, John Carter, chief executive, and Tony Wyand, an executive director

were £87 million higher, at £244 million. Mr Schraauwers said that bad weather since the start of this year had cost a further £10 million.

Car insurance, however, was unlikely to cost more, he said, "particularly because of the competition from the direct insurers". In the household insurance market, composite insurers will face competition in June from the Halifax, the

biggest building society, when it transfers its £300 million household buildings and contents insurance account to Royal Insurance.

CU also revealed that it did not expect claims arising from the IRA bomb in Docklands, east London, to exceed £5 million for damage to households. Like rivals, its liability is limited to £100,000 for commercial property. The

company's share price rose 10p to 614p yesterday.

John Carter, chief executive, said that having 69 per cent of premiums outside of the United Kingdom, and the stabilising effect of the life business would be important "as the cyclical downturn in the UK takes effect".

In France, pre-tax profit was £89 million (£8 million loss), and included a full year from

Abeille vie and Abeille assurance, while in The Netherlands, Delta Lloyd's pre-tax profit rose £62 million, to £162 million, including £18 million of life profits.

In North America, pre-tax profit rose £8 million, to £74 million, although catastrophe claims of £43 million were £7 million higher than in 1994.

Timespan, page 26

EEF seeks Labour role

BY PHILIP BASSETT, INDUSTRIAL EDITOR

BRITAIN'S engineering industry yesterday asked to take part in the Labour Party's task force on industrial competitiveness in what is thought to be the first formal move by business to join Labour in preparing for government.

In what is likely to be a controversial move, the Engineering Employers' Federation yesterday said that it would like to be a member of the task force or take an active step in forming policy in it on competitiveness for Labour in advance of a general election.

The EEF move is likely to be seen as embarrassing to the

Government, since the federation is considered one of the more traditional bastions of industry, in which support for the Conservatives runs deep.

Yesterday, however, the EEF's governing council was addressed by Margaret Beckett, Shadow Trade and Industry Secretary, and the group made public its desire to be involved in one of Labour's pre-election industrial task forces.

Set up under the Industry Forum, a body created by Labour to be a bridge between the party and business, there are now six task groups forming policy that will feed

into a Labour statement on business to the party conference in the summer.

Recently, Sir Terence Conran, founder of Habitat, declared his support for Labour at the launch of one of the task groups, on design and innovation, on which he is serving.

However, EEF council members made clear, in the meeting addressed by Mrs Beckett, their opposition to Labour's intention to sign up to the social chapter and to apply a national minimum wage, which members consider a threat to Britain's competitiveness.

Bremer Vulkan files for creditor protection

BY PHILIP PANGALOS

BREMER VULKAN, the troubled German shipbuilder, has announced 1995 losses of DM1 billion and filed for protection from its creditors after failing to secure an eleven-hour rescue package to keep it afloat.

Bremer Vulkan, Germany's largest shipbuilder, yesterday said: "After extensive negotiations with politicians, the European Union and banks, the board has to take the step of beginning composition proceedings since many of its units are insolvent."

Composition proceedings are aimed at rehabilitating an insolvent business by scaling down indebtedness, with creditors asked to forego a certain percentage of what the company owes them over a specified time period.

However, analysts said the move may do little more than delay Bremer Vulkan's bankruptcy, since creditors are unwilling to pump more money into a struggling shipbuilding industry, which faces cut-throat competition from Asian and Scandinavian yards.

Ernst & Young attacks 'radical' ASB changes

BY ROBERT BRUCE

IN AN unprecedented move, the giant accounting firm of Ernst & Young has issued a vehement attack on the changes in UK financial reporting practice being pioneered by the Accounting Standards Board. The firm has published a report entitled *The ASB's Framework - Time To Decide*. It concentrates on the recent ASB consultative draft of its "statement of principles". Nick Land, the senior partner, calls the ASB draft "theoretical to the point

that they are scarcely comprehensible by most accountants and other businessmen".

The report, written by technical partner Ron Patterson, argues that traditional accounting methods are being discarded in favour of a radical theoretical agenda. He calls the proposed framework "fundamentally misguided" and says that it "strives for an accountancy model that we do not believe is desirable, based on principles that we do not consider to be workable".

The changes come about as a result of the ASB's remit, which was to close the loopholes and grey areas that brought financial reporting into disrepute at the end of the 1980s.

Senior partners of other firms are backing Sir David Tweedie, chairman of the ASB. John Rogers, senior partner at Deloitte and Touche, said he was disappointed and surprised by the Ernst & Young attack. He said the ASB had done very well. "To describe them as radical is ludicrous."

Support for TransCo

TRANSOCO, British Gas's pipeline operation, said yesterday that it had been vindicated in its valuation of its own business by an independent review.

The valuation is "sensitive" ahead of the 1997 price control formula review that is scheduled to be announced by Clare Spottiswoode, the gas regulator, in the summer.

TransCo had been widely criticised for placing a figure of £18.2 billion at net book value for its business, with a replacement cost of £32.4 billion. The review by Arthur Andersen was undertaken in response to criticism levelled at the operation and involved TransCo and gas shippers that use the pipeline.

Bank	Share	Bank	Share
Australia & New Zealand	1.15	1.50	
Austria	1.15	1.50	
Belgium	1.15	1.50	
Canada	1.15	1.50	
Cyprus	1.15	1.50	
Denmark	1.15	1.50	
France	1.15	1.50	
Germany	1.15	1.50	
Greece	1.15	1.50	
Hong Kong	1.15	1.50	
India	1.15	1.50	
Italy	1.15	1.50	
Japan	1.15	1.50	
Malaysia	1.15	1.50	
Netherlands	1.15	1.50	
New Zealand	1.15	1.50	
Norway	1.15	1.50	
Portugal	1.15	1.50	
Spain	1.15	1.50	
Sweden	1.15	1.50	
Switzerland	1.15	1.50	
USA	1.15	1.50	

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• Puerto Seco de Madrid, S.A., formed by Puertos del Estado, the Port Authorities of Bilbao, Valencia, Barcelona and Algeciras, and SEPE, officially announces the selection process for the exploitation of a terminal located in the Logística Actividades Area at Coslada/Borjoles, in Madrid.

• Documentation for this selection can be obtained, after the 20th February, from Puertos del Estado, Secretaría General, Avda. del Portuario, 10 Campo de las Naciones, 28042 MADRID, SPAIN (Tel. 341/524 55 00 Ext. 1210. Fax 341/524 55 02). Tenders should be submitted by hand, at the abovementioned address, before 14.00 on the 20th March of this year.

COMPAGNIE FINANCIERE OTTOMANE GROUP					
Results for the year ended 31 December 1995					
	1995	1994	1993	1992	1991
	FRF '000	FRF '000	FRF '000	FRF '000	FRF '000
Net interest income	8,064	(21,589)	169,104	264,571	177,348
Securities income	4,802	20,252	146,992	133,683	143,982
Gain on sale of investments	90	1,910,871	64,275	34,339	107,108
Gain on revaluation of land investments	13,611	5,838	48,997	34,123	5,879
Dividend income	654	1,143	119	41,401	37,286
Other income	8,009	4,988	119	8,546	8,546
Provisionary gains	21,947	32,472	28,312	99,816	132,028
Other	—	—	1,088	114	114
	57,894	17,947	433,107	593,225	491,891
Operating expenses	19,248	21,046	101,226	182,938	204,004
Change for tax and audit	—	—	14,079	17,819	14,079
	—	—	116,147	164,789	177,819
Operating profit before tax	38,646	13,199	276,323	392,498	293,176
Current tax	(12,627)	4,361	90,170	108,467	87,548
Operating profit after current tax	26,019	15,523	186,153	284,031	205,628
Deferred tax	—	—	—	—	—
Net investment loss	—	—	—	—	—
Profit after tax attributable to shareholders	—	—	—	—	—
Distributions proposed	—	—	—	—	—
Profit retained	—	—	—	—	—
Earnings per share	FRF 24.57	FRF 19.39	FRF 24.57	FRF 19.39	FRF 19.39
Capital Resources	FRF 1,187,515	FRF 1,187,515	FRF 1,187,515	FRF 1,187,515	FRF 1,187,515

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Voting papers to arrive on or before Tuesday 5 March 1996

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COMPAGNIE FINANCIERE OTTOMANE SA

Annual general meeting 1996

Notice of meeting

The annual general meeting for the year 1996 of Compagnie Financière Ottomane SA will be held on Wednesday 15 May 1996 at 11.30 am at Banque Paribas Luxembourg, 10A Boulevard Royal, Luxembourg to transact the following business:

Resolutions

- To receive the report and adopt the audited accounts for the year ended 31 December 1995.
- To approve the proposed distributions.
- To discharge the directors and auditors.
- To re-elect Monsieur Jacques de Fouchier, Monsieur Christian Marnet and Sir John Smith as directors.
- To reappoint Deloitte & Touche as auditors.

Monsieur J. Wismay, Secrétaire Général Compagnie Financière Ottomane SA, 23 Avenue de la Porte Neuve L-2227 LUXEMBOURG

Notes

To attend the general meeting, holders of bearer shares must deposit their shares at least 10 days before the date fixed for the meeting.

In Luxembourg at the head office of the company at the above address, in London, at Ottoman Financial Services, King William House, 2A Eastcheap, London EC3M 1AA. In France, where shares are deposited with SICOVAM, shareholders must advise the blocking of their shares through their deposit agent either to Banque Paribas, 3 Rue d'Antin, 75002 Paris or to Compagnie Financière Ottomane, 7 Rue Meyerbeer, 75009 Paris.

The report and the accounts which will be presented to the general meeting are available to the shareholders at the head office in Luxembourg and at the offices in London and Paris.

22 February 1996

□ An American buyer for British Energy? □ Bankers support personal IDs □ Making sense of retail sales

Dukes of nuclear hazard

WHEN potential customers dither, what better to help to make up their minds than a stranger keen to buy the whole stock. Before privatisation of conventional power generators, PowerGen looked destined to be the unregarded also-ran to National Power. But that all changed when Lord Hanson did ministers a good turn by putting his company forward as preferred bidder in a possible trade sale.

If Hanson thought PowerGen was worth the once-over, it would surely rise in the opinions of City fund managers. So it did, and Hanson's initial enthusiasm has proved well-founded. Would the Government have sold to Hanson, then indubitably led by "one of us", rather than to the great British public? In the event, that issue was not put to the test. Hanson's price ideas failed to excite the Treasury.

This time it could be different. Duke Power, the American utility now in talks to buy British Energy, has no overt motive to help out John Major's government. It must be serious. With Tim "Schwarzenegger" Eggar at the helm, it would also be unwise to rule out the politically unthinkable. After mass pit closures, the Brent Spar affair and the sack of British Gas, the muscular, soon-to-depart industry minister might reveal in the backlash against selling our nuclear in-

dustry to a foreign utility at a fraction of its cost. On the surface, British Energy is a great proposition. Its big investment phase is over, cash flows are strong and, by virtue of its role in providing 24-hour baseload power, its market share is secure for the life of its plants. New nuclear stations are ruled out for years ahead, so the main purpose of investment is to sustain corporate momentum and keep ambitious managers busy. For a foreign buyer, non-nuclear investment would be optional, along with much of the 1.8 per cent of turnover devoted to R&D. As for those promises to the Scots — well, after Guinness and Britoil, they are used to having them broken.

As each veil is lifted on the sale plans, however, the more ammunition City doubters garner. The Trade and Industry Select committee, hardly radical, argued for much higher annual contributions to the segregated sinking fund for decommissioning and other nuclear liabilities with an estimated present value of £7.6 billion. This is because taxpayers are eternal but private

companies are only human. It is also hard to justify taxpayers accepting liability for the uninsured cost of nuclear accidents above £140 million.

In a public sale, the price will inevitably be pushed scandalously low by such niggles, along with Opposition musing and fears that the shares will plummet in the dark. For taxpayers, the correct response is not to make a trade sale abroad, but gradual privatisation. If only a third of British Energy were initially sold, taxpayers could benefit if and when experience breeds confidence in its performance in the private sector.

Mistaken over identity cards

IDENTITY cards, like republican and armed policemen, have always been deemed acceptable abroad but incompatible with the British way of life. The armed police are by now inevitable, and republican has its attractions. But there is still time to resist ID cards. The idea has the backing of



PENNINGTON

senior ministers, which is one strike against it. The British Bankers' Association also supports identity cards, even if yesterday's consultative document steered conveniently clear of the real reasons. The banks bear much of the cost of credit card and other fraud, and are also under growing government pressure to crack down on money laundering.

A workable system that stopped the passing of stolen cheques or credit cards would require little more than a picture of the user on the relevant card, a process well within the abilities of existing technology. Most of the banks have failed to provide this, and they now prefer to throw the responsibility, and

presumably the expense, onto the Government via ID cards.

As to money laundering, nearly all of this, the banks accept, is done through corporate accounts rather than personal ones. Requiring someone to produce an ID card before opening an account will have little impact on international crime. It would, however, deny access to banking to those unwilling to carry a card while providing the banks with the ideal excuse if it is later proven that any account is put to the wrong use.

ID cards are another example of the shift in policing away from those who commit crimes and towards those who are rather easier to catch, the majority of law-abiding citizens. Car drivers, if they choose to exceed the speed limit, already know they are more likely to be caught and prosecuted than the professional thief who burgles their car for a living.

An identity card system that was affordable would be no bar to criminals — indeed the provision of fake IDs would provide an income for a whole new profession of them. But it would

throw instant and unwarranted suspicion on any respectable member of the public who did not feel like carrying one.

Marching towards more rate cuts

THERE would seem to be no reason, other than sheer perversity, why the last base rate cut on January 18 should not be followed by another the next time the Chancellor and Governor of the Bank of England meet on March 7. Eddie George has by now made it sufficiently clear, in the minutes for January's meeting and elsewhere, that he stands for the forces of caution and responsibility. It is up to Kenneth Clarke to set the pace.

This was the response yesterday on the gilts pitches at an early rate to a weak set of retail sales figures. The only question was the extent that special factors had sucked the growth out of the January figures.

The Bank of England's Inflation Report last week made it clear that, in the past, forward forecasting has been wrong as

often as it has been right, but that as far as anyone knows, inflation targets will be met. The preference is for gradual, quarter-point cuts of the type we have been seeing.

As to the one-off distorting the January sales, the weather was indeed lousy but monthly figures are notoriously volatile anyway. Two rollovers on the Lottery had some effect but will eventually show up in consumer spending figures. Underlying the numbers was a clear sign of a slow-down in consumer spending. If this continues, a further rate cut will become politically essential.

Numbers game

THE HALIFAX is adopting a "softly, softly" approach to demanding, as would be expected by a cuddly building society. Once a bank and quoted on the stock market, a rather harsher view may prevail. The big clearers have come in for enough criticism over job losses, but most accept there is further to go. For the purposes of crude comparison, the NatWest employs on average fewer than 22 people per branch. The Halifax, which would slot in as Britain's third biggest bank, will employ 26 people — but only if the provision of 1,000 job cuts, unconfirmed by the Halifax yesterday, are well-grounded.

French revamp aerospace and stir BAE hopes

By ROSS TYRMAN
INDUSTRIAL CORRESPONDENT

FRANCE has triggered the long-awaited restructuring of its defence and aerospace industries. In a move that will clear the way for overdue joint ventures and more collaboration with British and German rivals, President Jacques Chirac will today announce a committee to engineer a merger of state-owned Aerospatiale, the civil aircraft group, and Dassault, builder of the Mirage and Rafale fighters and Falcon business jets.

Thomson, the defence and consumer electronics holding company, is to be privatised later this year, the office of Alain Juppé, the French Prime Minister, said yesterday. Thomson is widely seen as a potential partner for GEC, whose GEC-Marconi arm is Britain's second-biggest defence group after British Aerospace.

GEC-Marconi and Thomson CSF, Thomson's £4.6 billion a year defence arm, are already extending their collaboration in submarine sonars, Ferranti Thomson Sonar Systems, and have formed a joint company, GDTAR, to develop a common radar to upgrade the Rafale and the Eurofighter being developed by Britain, Germany, Italy and Spain.

Defence industry executives believe that the French are anxious to create an Anglo-French counterweight to the growing French-German axis embracing missiles, satellites and helicopters. "GEC is an obvious partner for Thomson," said one GEC-Marconi executive. Its parent has already established a massive 50-50 Anglo-French joint venture in power systems



Dassault, maker of Rafale fighter aircraft, faces a merger

and railway equipment, GEC Alsthom.

The French government has yet to decide whether to split out Thomson Consumer Electronics, which makes television sets and hi-fis around the world. However, in an unexpected move, Alain Gomez, chairman of Thomson since 1982, is being replaced by Marcel Roulet, past chairman of France Telecom. France Telecom has 20 per cent of the growing French-German axis embracing missiles, satellites and helicopters. "GEC is an obvious partner for Thomson," said one GEC-Marconi executive. Its parent has already established a massive 50-50 Anglo-French joint venture in power systems

BAE, meantime, will be seeking opportunities arising from the moves to restructure France's technically advanced

but financially weak aircraft industry.

The British group is working with Dassault to develop a strike aircraft to replace ground-attack versions of Britain's Tornado jets and the French Mirage in the next century. It has a 20 per cent stake in Airbus Industrie, the civil jet consortium in which Aerospatiale and Daimler-Benz of Germany each control 37.7 per cent.

President Chirac is reported to have told Serge Dassault, founder of the family-controlled warplane group, in which the government has a stake: "Dassault is too small, especially on a European level."

'Doubts' on Nadir broker

A stockbroker employed by Asil Nadir traded almost exclusively in Polly Peck International (PPI) shares on behalf of various Swiss-based companies, and was frequently late in settling the transactions, the Central Criminal Court was told yesterday.

Jason Davies, who worked from Geneva, once blamed a hurricane in the Cayman Islands for late settlement with AJ Bekhor, a stockbroking firm. Once, a debt for £307,000 was settled 11 days late.

Hugo Berke, former compliance officer at the firm, told the court of his "doubts" about Mr Davies' dealings on behalf of Riverbridge, Newbridge and Gaseway. He had raised his concerns with Mr Davies, who assured him that the companies were not connected. Mrs Berke — now giving evidence at the trial of Elizabeth Forsyth, former chairman of South Audley Management. Mrs Forsyth, 59, denies handling £307,000 and £28,050 in funds allegedly stolen by Mr Nadir from PPI.

T&N advances

T&N, the automotive component and engineering group, announced a rise in pre-tax profits in T&N Holdings, its South African division, to R56.1 million (£9.58 million) for the year to December 31 (£4.6 million).

Payout lifted

Foreign & Colonial's Enterprise investment trust celebrated a 23.2 per cent increase in net asset value by raising its final dividend 50 per cent to 1.2p in the year to December 31. Cash realisations totalled £25.8 million.

Torex expands

Torex Hire, the tool hire company, has bought STL, a developer and supplier of computer based management systems, for £2.65 million cash and an issue of seven million ordinary shares.

Elf held back by flagging chemicals and refining

By CARL MORTSHED

THE downstream oil activities of Elf Aquitaine, the French energy and pharmaceuticals group, are being hit by refining overcapacity in Europe and petrol price competition in France and the UK.

A surge in oil production and recovery in chemicals helped Elf to achieve a 65 per cent rise in net income to Fr5 billion last year. However, Philippe Jaffré, chairman and chief executive, said the second half had been affected by a flagging of the favourable trend in chemicals and deteriorating refining

margins. The company sold the Texasgulf chemicals business at the beginning of last year, and M. Jaffré said Elf would continue to cut costs and dispose of non-core assets. He announced a new target for the group of a 10 per cent return on equity by 1998.

Elf's exploration and production profits rose from Fr6.9 billion to Fr8 billion after an 8 per cent boost to oil and gas production, mainly in the UK and Norway. Average oil prices rose from \$15.80 in 1994 to \$17 last year, but much of

the currency gain was lost because of the weaker franc.

Elf plans to invest Fr50 billion upstream over the next five years and is seeking a third leg to add to its areas in the North Sea and West of Africa. A further Fr10 billion will be invested downstream. Elf's refining operations only broke even last year, while chemicals contributed Fr5 billion (Fr1.8 billion). Elf is maintaining the net dividend at Fr13 per share.

Tempos, page 26

Vodafone warning

VODAFONE, the largest mobile phone company, said yesterday that increased price competition among the four main operators in Britain will put a damper on its profits growth in the forthcoming year.

The company is reducing the tariffs on its digital service by up to 30 per cent in April, largely in response to lower tariffs introduced by other operators, notably Orange.

Vodafone said capital spending will reach £450 million in the year to March 31, rising to £700 million next year. BT has formed a joint venture with MCI of the US and three others to bid for licences for an international telecoms service in Israel.

COMMERCIAL UNION

CU
COMMERCIAL UNION

12 MONTHS' RESULTS

Record profits

- 14% growth in pre-tax operating profit to £509m.
- Full year dividend increased by 7% to 28.25p.
- Strong profit growth from operations outside the United Kingdom.
- Life profits £87m higher at £244m.
- Shareholders' funds up 30% to £4,074m.

	12 months 1995 Unaudited	12 months 1994 Restated Unaudited
Total premium income	£2,687m	£2,762m
Operating profit before taxation	£309m	£446m
Profit on ordinary activities before taxation	£294m	£430m
Profit attributable to shareholders	£444m	£379m
Operating earnings per ordinary share	52.1p	55.0p
Dividend per ordinary share	28.25p	26.40p
Shareholders' funds	£4,074m	£3,143m

1. Profit on ordinary activities before taxation includes realised investment gains of £130m (1994 £125m) and a net loss on termination of activities of £2m (1994 £12m).
2. The 1994 profit and loss account has been restated to reflect the change to a two year fund basis of accounting for certain London market business, which increased profits by £10m.
3. The results of the operating subsidiaries of Groupe Victor, which are now incorporated within CU France, were consolidated for the first time in the fourth quarter of 1994.

Full statutory accounts, which have not yet been reported on by the auditors, will be circulated to shareholders on 20 March 1996 and delivered to the Registrar of Companies after the Annual General Meeting which will be held on 16 April 1996. Copies can be obtained after 20 March 1996 from the Shareholder Relations Service at the address below.

Commercial Union plc, St. Helen's, 1 Undershaft, London EC3P 3DQ

Tel: 0171 283 7300

Internet: <http://www.commercial-union.co.uk/cu/12mthres.htm>

This advertisement is issued in compliance with the requirements of the London Stock Exchange Limited ("The London Stock Exchange"). It does not constitute an offer or invitation to any person to subscribe for or purchase any securities in Torex Hire PLC ("the Company").
Application has been made to The London Stock Exchange for the existing ordinary shares of 10p each and the new ordinary shares of 10p each of Torex Hire PLC to be admitted to the Official List. It is expected that admission to the Official List will become effective and that dealings will commence in the existing ordinary shares and the new ordinary shares in the Company on 20 March 1996.

TOREX HIRE PLC

(to be renamed Torex Group PLC)
(Incorporated and Registered in England No. 1007428)

Proposed Acquisition of Smart Terminals Limited

Share Capital
After the Acquisition

Number	Amount	Number	Amount
31,000,000	£3,100,000 ordinary shares of 10p each	23,641,491	£2,364,149.70

Copies of the Listing Particulars, which were published on 21 February 1996, are available for collection during normal business hours for a period of two business days from 22 February 1996 from Company Announcements, The London Stock Exchange, London Stock Exchange Tower, Capital Centre Entrance, Off Bartholomew Lane, London EC2N 1HP, and on any weekday up to and including 7 March 1996 from:

Torex Hire PLC
1 Cannon Road
Heathfield
Newtown Abbot
Devon TQ12 6SH
Bell Lawrie White & Co
(a division of Borealis Dolphin Bell Lawrie Limited)
(Sponsor)
40 St. Vincent Street
Glasgow G2 5TS
Borealis Dolphin Bell Lawrie Limited
5 Giltspur Street
London
EC1A 1BD
22 February 1996

Lloyds TSB ready to buy again 'if fit and price is right'

By PATRICIA TEHAN, BANKING CORRESPONDENT

ONLY two months after its £16.8 billion merger, Lloyds TSB is back on the acquisition trail, running its slide rule over large building societies, life insurance companies and fund managers.

Sir Brian Pitman, chief executive of Lloyds TSB, refused yesterday to be drawn on which of the three would be most attractive. Any acquisition "depends entirely on the fit and the price", he said.

Lloyds TSB had not been expected to consider another significant acquisition for at least 12 months. However, Sir Brian said that its £18 billion takeover of Cheltenham & Gloucester last August and the TSB merger made it a strongly cash-generative business, that could fund another acquisition if the fit was right.

Sir Brian went on: "If you are in an industry which is consolidating then there is no doubt in my mind that there will be further acquisitions in the financial services industry

in 1996. We have been participating in this consolidation and will continue to participate."

The acquisition of a life mutual, to complement Lloyds Abbey Life and TSB Life businesses, made sense. But there was a lot of interest in life companies, and "if you are not careful some very fancy prices are paid. We are not in the business of paying a price that would not reward our shareholders," he added.

Lloyds TSB would also consider the acquisition that would enable it to expand its mortgage business. However, its net new lending last year was £2.1 billion, which meant any acquisition would have to be "sizeable", Sir Brian said.

The bank would also look at a fund management acquisition at the right price. After the TSB merger, the combined Lloyds and Hill Samuel fund management businesses had £28 billion under management in the UK, he said.

STOCK MARKET

MICHAEL CLARK

Greenspan gives shares a push with rates forecast

AN OPENING surge on Wall Street in both equities and US Treasury bonds, helped London to shake off its earlier blues and end the day on a positive note. The FT-SE 100 index staged a 37-point turnaround to close 11 points higher at 3,725.6 as a total of 710 million shares changed hands.

Alan Greenspan, chairman of the Federal Reserve, came to the rescue of financial markets on both sides of the Atlantic with some soothing words about the US economy that raised hopes of an early cut in prime rates. He said that if further progress was made in the direction of a balanced budget, it would lead to a significant drop in long-term interest rates.

His views revived hopes in London that there is still scope for the Bank of England to make another early cut in base rates.

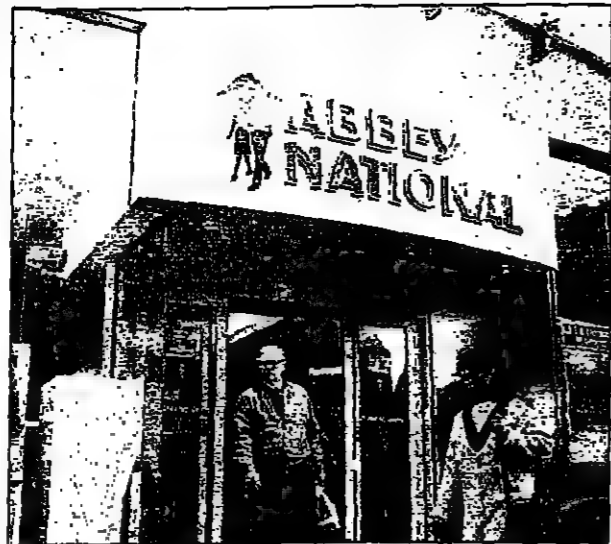
On the takeover front, Lloyds Chemists firmed 2p to 49p as the battle for control intensified, with GEHE raising the terms of its initial offer and UniChem snapping up 8.6 per cent of the company in a dawn raid on the shares. It followed the move by GEHE, the German pharmaceutical distributor, to increase the terms of its offer by 50p to 500p a share. The new terms value Lloyds Chemists at almost £650 million.

UniChem responded by sending brokers BZW and UBS into the market-place to snap up stock at 47p a share, raising its stake in the company to almost 10 per cent.

UniChem said its acquisition of Lloyds would enhance earnings. By the close of business more than 30 million Lloyds shares had changed hands. UniChem finished 7p better at 249p.

The speculators were out in force at House of Fraser (Hof), the Army & Navy and Dickins & Jones stores group, as the price climbed 1p to 188p on turnover of two million shares. The shares hit a low of 163p last month after the group issued a profit warning. Despite the recent rally, the Hof share price has failed to live up to expectations and may prove vulnerable to a bid approach.

Brokers say Sears, unchanged at 95p, would have the financial muscle to make such a move, but the Selbries stores group has problems of its own which it may wish to



Abbey National shares fell 7p on large turnover

sort out first. A profits warning sent shares of Wagon Industrial tumbling 32p to 389p. The engineer said that underlying pre-tax profits for the year to March 1996 were likely to fall short of market expectations, currently pitched at about £28.3 million. It blamed lack of demand and problems with integrating acquisitions. De-

overseas operations accounted for 61 per cent of overall operating results. CU's performance focused attention on the rest of the insurance sector ahead of what is now expected to be an encouraging dividend season. Top of fund managers' lists was Royal Insurance, up 12p at 386p ahead of figures out soon. Guardian Royal Ex-

Abbey National fell 7p to 592p as a large line of shares went through the market. SBC Warburg, the broker, placed ten million as part of a bought deal, picked up at 585p from one institution before selling them on at 590p for a profit of £450,000.

mand in this country was weaker than previously experienced and margin pressure in Europe remained.

Brokers gave a warm response to full-year figures from Commercial Union (CU), Britain's biggest insurer, with the shares responding with a jump of 10p to 614p. Pre-tax profits last year grew from £460 million to a record £509 million. The group's

change also firmed 1p to 246p, while among the life companies, London & Manchester rose 12p to 392p. Legal & General 8p to 726p, and Britannia 1p to 743p.

The banks responded positively to comments from UBS, the broker, which takes the view that interest rates are heading down to about the 5 per cent level. National Westminster Bank, reflecting

Tuesday's profits news and this week's £460 million acquisition of Garmore, stood out with a rise of 17p to 701p. Royal Bank of Scotland, the takeover favourite, added 7p to 584p, and Standard Chartered 4p to 603p.

Videologic, the multimedia specialist, firmed 1p to 75p after it was signalled that the shares had become a "chart breakout" and a buy. MAI grew 5p to 436p after the rumoured bid from Michael Green's Carlton Communications failed to materialise. But the City is convinced that Carlton is poised to make a move, although its target may not necessarily be MAI. Others in the frame include United News & Media, publisher of the Daily Express, which is ready to merge itself with M&L 1p lighter at 641p. Mirror Group, unchanged at 212p, and Scottish Television, steady at 70p. Carlton ended the day down 8p at £100.

Later, the healthcare group, firmed another 2p to 64p, drawing encouragement from news of this week's boardroom reshuffle. Shareholders at Tuesday's annual meeting were told that Ken Harvey had been appointed non-executive chairman and Jeremy Earnshaw group finance director.

GILT-EDGED: A weaker than expected set of January retail sales and the encouraging outlook for US interest rates saw prices in London shake off an early fall to close substantially higher on the day. The long end of the market recorded gains of more than 11.

Traders are now pinning their hopes on an early cut in US interest rates. They take the view that there is scope for a softening of rates over here. In the futures pit, the March series of the long gilt made up early loss ground to finish £11.10 up on the day at 107 1/2. In another day of heavy turnover that saw 92,000 contracts completed.

Treasury 8 per cent 2015 climbed £1 1/2 to 99 1/2, while at the shorter end Treasury 8 per cent 2000 was £3 1/2 better at £103 1/2.

NEW YORK: Shares on Wall Street rebounded in response to the second day of congressional testimony by Alan Greenspan, chairman of the Federal Reserve. By mid-day the Dow Jones industrial average was 55.63 points higher at 5,514.16.

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Chemists mix love potions

IN THE February of a leap year, Lloyds Chemists' shareholders have the pleasant dilemma of choosing between two rival suitors.

On the face of it there is not much to distinguish between the two. Gehe, the ambitious and wealthy German, has made an increased — but not final — offer of £650 million, marginally ahead of a rival offer from UniChem. Ironically, it was yesterday's increased offer from Gehe which helped lift the value of UniChem's bid, raising the price of its shares. Gehe's allure is that its offer is all cash, compared to UniChem's cash and share mix. Shareholders dithering over accepting Gehe's cash need to decide whether an enlarged UniChem will offer better growth.

Both bidders agree there would be considerable cost savings in a marriage of UniChem

and Lloyds Chemists, but Gehe has cast doubt on UniChem's claim that most of the gains — reckoned to be £25 million — would come in the first year. The German company reckons that full integration will take several years, a prospect that would dampen investor enthusiasm for the deal. Fear of dilution has depressed the UniChem share price and, notwithstanding the commercial and strategic logic of the deal, there is a question mark over the stock's future performance.

There is a worry that UniChem will lose a commercial advantage to Gehe if the latter wins Lloyds, but the German has been slow to achieve much progress with its last UK acquisition. In the circumstances, the Gehe cash looks more appealing; alternatively investors can sell in the market and buy a resurgent UniChem.

CU GOOD profits from life insurance and from overseas, managed to cheer investors in Commercial Union who are worried about the gloom that is afflicting composite insurers. The UK general insurance market is well off its peak, but overseas markets have become as important to the company.

However, the results still failed to answer fundamental questions about strategy and, in particular, Viotore, Commercial Union's expensive French acquisition. The French market is still difficult, and although CU said yesterday that premium rates were still moving upwards, others in the French market see premiums peaking. If that is the case, it could be a disappointing outlook for CU, with the French operation apparently

still experiencing weak underwriting margins. Meanwhile, CU has demonstrated that it has played the insurance cycle well in the UK, with only a slight reduction in profits in spite of increased competition and a rise in claims from burst pipes. CU increased its motor-related business aggressively early in the cycle

and over the past year has been trimming its exposure as rates have weakened. CU is best seen as a portfolio of insurance businesses in different markets, but investors might have preferred a more focused strategy that avoided the huge goodwill write-off from Viotore, which has still to prove its worth.

Elf Aquitaine FT IS the fashion for oil companies to display their financial targets and yesterday Elf said it expected to achieve a 10 per cent return on equity by 1998. Having produced satisfactory results, Elf may feel it can encourage investors with challenging targets. Unfortunately, non-French investors are less interested in the target figure than in precisely how Elf intends to achieve it.

Yesterday, Philippe Jaffré, the chairman, made impressive noises about huge upstream investments over the next five years. But Elf is making slow progress in the critical area of reserves, by replacement, only just managing 100 per cent of its production last year. That compares with industry averages nearer 120 per cent and does not reflect well of a company with such a heavy upstream bias.

Elf's target rate of return is well above last year's 7 per cent, but with the cost of capital in the oil industry of about 12 per cent, it is not an impressive target, even less so when other major oil companies are achieving 15 per cent. With the chemicals cycle past its peak, Elf needs success upstream to improve its share price and past performance gives little confidence.

My Kinda Town WITH new restaurants opening on every corner, results from My Kinda Town were a useful reminder that the trade is vulnerable to shocks. The company's French business was decimated by French strikes and terrorist attacks, leaving profits unchanged despite growth in the UK and Germany.

The return of terrorist bombs in London must be a concern to the company, although restaurateurs claim that because a smaller proportion of their trade is tour-

ist-related, they are less exposed than hotels. The argument suggests that after a brief interval, suburbanites will not be deterred from their night on the town.

For investors, the greater concern is the huge increase in restaurant capacity, recently accelerated by the fashion for the 200-plus seater venues. My Kinda Town's contract to run the Capital Radio restaurant at Leicester Square pits the firm against nearby Planet Hollywood and the planned Fashion Cafe, while in Covent Garden bids are being made for a restaurant site with a capacity for over 600 covers.

With huge fit-out costs, investors need to be confident that the theme will last more than five years and My Kinda Town is sensibly putting capital into the radio restaurant. In the end, the landlords may be the big winners in the restaurant race.

EDITED BY CARL MORRIS

Closing Prices Page 29

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THE TIMES
CITY DIARY

Guinness-free day for Lyell

BUT for the little matter of the Scott report, Sir Nicholas Lyell, the Attorney-General, might have been in Strasbourg on Monday. Instead, he was in the Commons facing his monthly 15-minute question session from fellow MPs, not a few of whom felt that he should resign forthwith.

As the most senior law officer in the land, Sir Nicholas was to have represented the Government in the hearing before the European Court of Human Rights in which Ernest Saunders, the former Guinness chairman, was pleading that he had been denied a fair trial.

With the Scott report timetable in mind, the Government undoubtedly thought it wise that Sir Nicholas should be on hand and in London on Monday.

On to put it another way, it would have been unthinkable that the Attorney-General was thought to have left the country so soon after the Scott report had been published.

Cedric Part II
TODAY, British Gas's outgoing chief executive Cedric Brown intends bowing out of his last press presentation with more aplomb than was afforded him at the recent press conference for the company's demerger.

To British Gas's embarrassment on that occasion, his early retirement received more publicity than the group's carefully laid demerger plans.

This time round, Richard Giordano, British Gas chairman, is insisting that there is a separate meeting in another room after the announcement of the figures, in which he and Brown can answer questions in an orderly fashion.

Cedric Part II will be fighting free, hopefully.

Missing 'wake'
MEANWHILE, I learn that Brown is unaccountably unable to attend a glittering party at the Commons next week.

He has been asked to a "wake". Not his, I hasten to add, but that of the Commons Employment Select Committee, which is to disappear following the merging of the employment and education departments.

A motley crew of other Hon. Members, employment specialists, and witnesses who have appeared before the committee more than once, have been invited, according to its chairman, Greville Janner.

As Brown was grilling twice last year over his 75 per cent pay rise, which sparked off the row over fat-cat pay and led to the setting up of the Greenbury committee, he was an obvious guest to invite. Sadly, he is busy that night.

Mega Megastore
THE irrepressible Richard Branson has chosen April 23 as the opening date for the world's biggest music shop, a Virgin Megastore in Times Square in Manhattan. With 75,000 feet of retail space on three floors, the store will have more than a million CDs, 150,000 music titles, a vast laser disc and video section, multimedia stations, a concert piano and a stage.

COLIN CAMPBELL

German savers have lost faith in 'Camembert' mark

The EMU effect is the forerunner of political and economic tensions that await Europe

About a year ago I attended a small lunch in the City with a recently retired member of the Bundesbank Council. The guest, a lifelong Bundesbank official, had always opposed the idea of European Monetary Union but had been unable to voice his opinions in public until his retirement. He now predicted — with an outspokenness and clarity that British Eurosceptics would envy — that the German political elite's obsession with monetary union would lead to disaster.

Impressed as I was by his account, I felt that he had left the most important question unanswered. It was all very well to argue that EMU would be a monumental blunder but history showed that political leaders were all too frequently capable of making catastrophic mistakes. And no nation in history had been more guilty of making horrible misjudgments than Germany. As an analyst, we had to distinguish between what we thought ought to happen and what actually would happen. Regardless of what he considered right, did our German guest expect EMU to happen?

The Bundesbank's reply gave a premonition of the great political-economic tensions that I think will dominate the European economy and the world financial markets in the coming months.

"I can only answer your question with a brief story. Since I retired from the Bundesbank some of my relatives have asked me what they should do with their savings as the date for monetary union approaches. I have always given the same answer: if you want to keep your savings in a hard currency, sell your German government bonds and put the money in Swiss francs."

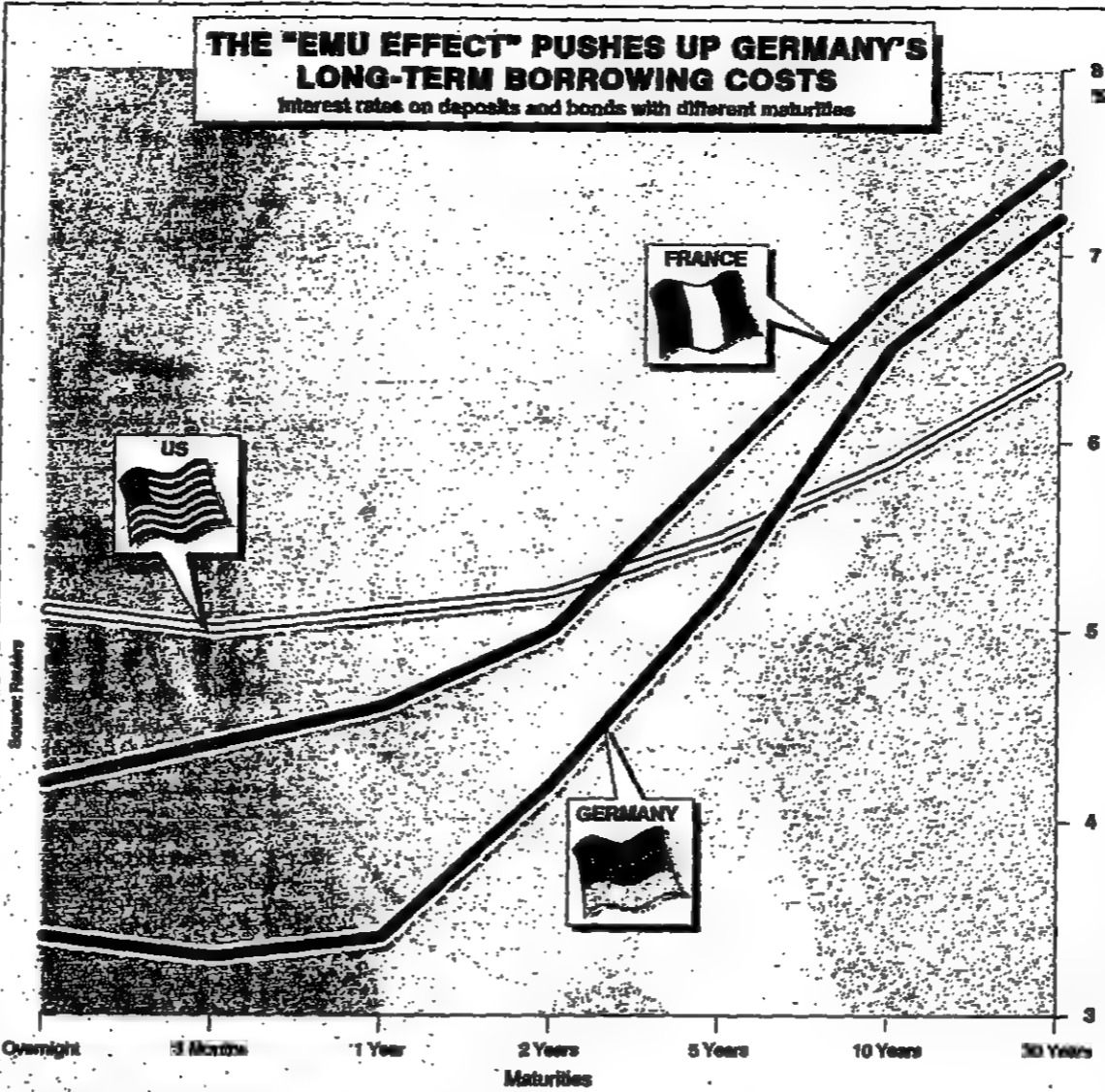
After a pause to let this apostasy sink in, the Bundesbanker moved to his second punch-line: "More and more Germans are starting to think in this way. In the end the German government may find it can no longer sell its bonds on the market to German savers. That is the one pressure which could make politicians think again and stop monetary union."

These words started to ring true last summer, when German retail deposits flooded out of the mark into the Swiss franc.

Both the Kohl Government and the Buba were clearly rattled by this flight into Switzerland and immediately responded with aggressive rhetoric, insisting that EMU would happen on the toughest of German terms or not at all. It was no coincidence that this was the moment chosen by Theo Waigel, the German Finance Minister, suddenly to demand a draconian new "stability pact", going far beyond the terms of the Maastricht treaty, in exchange for giving up the mark.

By the end of last year, however, the pressures in Germany seemed to dissipate and Herr Kohl felt free to give EMU a new lease of life. At the Madrid summit, the Waigel stability pact was allowed to vanish into the bowels of the Brussels bureaucracy. The Bundesbank started to cut its interest rates far more aggressively than it had dared to do earlier in 1995 during the Swiss capital flight.

Under these circumstances it has not taken long for German savers to start



worrying again about the threat of EMU. As a result of EMU fears Germany's ten-year interest rates have soared from 5.7 per cent to 6.4 per cent in the past month. But why blame this on EMU?

Firstly, because the Bundesbank itself now does. By all accounts, Buba officials right up to Hans Tietmeyer, the president, now speak openly among themselves and with their G7 colleagues about "the EMU effect". The painful consequences of this effect are illustrated in the chart. The Bundesbank has pushed its short-term interest rates far below American levels, yet longer-term bond yields, over which the central bank has no direct control, have stubbornly refused to move down. As a result, German companies are paying far more than American ones for their long-term borrowing. In an economy where investment and even consumer credit are financed largely through long-term borrowing in the bond market, the Bundesbank's inability to reduce the long-term rate of interest poses a much bigger threat than it would in Britain or even America.

This leads to the second reason for confidently blaming the rout in German bonds on EMU. Apart from the threat of EMU, everything else in the German economic background has been pointing to lower, rather than higher, long-term interest rates — especially in comparison with US rates. The recent worldwide bond rout was not very surprising — a setback in America, and Japan, was predictable and widely predicted. The real surprise has been that the German bond market has suffered more than any other (in bond market parlance, the

spread between German and American bond yields has widened abruptly, instead of narrowing, as almost any analysis of the economic fundamentals would have predicted).

In America, Japan and even Britain, where bond markets have also fallen, economic conditions are completely unlike Germany's. Business activity is starting to accelerate, investors are nervous about inflation, the prospects for deficit reduction are much less promising than a few months ago and bond yields are already low compared with short-term rates.

In Germany, by contrast, the economy is still weakening, inflation has practically vanished, the budgetary zeal seems as strong as ever and bond yields are exceptionally high in relation to short rates (in the financial parlance "the yield curve is exceptionally steep").

Yet despite all these clear fundamentals, pressures for lower bond rates — so say nothing about struggling German industrialists' evident need for lower borrowing costs — Germany's long-term interest rates have risen much faster than America's and faster even than in Britain or France. And as long as the EMU effect continues to frighten off German bond investors, the Bundesbank may be unable to get long-term interest rates down to the levels needed to revive German industry.

If the Bundesbank's paralysis persists, the implications could become alarming, not only for Germany but for the whole European economy. Germany, along with France and the Benelux countries, could soon be on the brink of a full-scale recession and the Bundesbank would be powerless to help.

If the Bundesbank's paralysis persists the implications could become alarming

Secondly, the Buba could consciously accept that from now on it is managing a French-style Camembert mark: it could cut short-term interest rates aggressively and actively try to devalue the Camembert mark against the dollar, without paying heed to such vestiges of the "hard mark" regime as the German money supply.

The Bundesbank's third option is to try to muddle through, pretending it is still the guardian of a hard D-mark, which investors know to be a soft Camembert C-mark. This choice will mean high long-term interest rates, stagnation for German industry and misery for the European economy.

Business must clean up its own act on late payments

Tony Bonner calls for education not legislation to tackle problem

Late payment has become something of a cause célèbre, with politicians competing to champion the small business cause — and occasionally tripping over their shoelaces.

Hardly a day goes by without an article, a new survey, a letter to the newspapers, or a Private Member's Bill in the Commons complaining that small firms in the UK are being suffocated because they are not getting paid on time.

But how big a problem is late payment? Only last week, a survey by the Forum of Private Business was reported as claiming that late payers "keep small firms waiting 77 days". In fact, the survey showed that the average time taken to pay a bill in the UK, including those who pay on time, was 49 days. The figure of 77 days was an average of the bills that were paid late — ignoring the greater weight of bills that were paid promptly.

The real figure of 49 days is in line with other surveys, including those of the CBI (53 days) and Grant Thornton (50 days), and compares favourably with a European average of 61 days. Even though the latest Grant Thornton figures show a marginal increase in the UK average, they also show that we must keep the problem of late payment in perspective. That is not to say that late payment is not a serious problem for many firms. But the debate must be based on fact, not emotion. If we are to find workable solutions.

So who is responsible for late payment — Government, suppliers or customers? Government obviously sets the standard — and generally performs quite well. The DTI claims to pay 93 per cent of its bills within 30 days, and all government departments have now been required to sign up to the CBI's Prompt Payers Code, but there remain pockets of poor performance that must be tackled.

Suppliers must also bear some of the blame. Bad credit management is often a factor in late payment. If invoices are not sent out on time, contain errors, or are inadequately documented, you cannot blame the customer if payment is delayed. Obviously, a large share of the blame must rest with customers themselves. There are several reasons for delaying payment of bills, such as insolvency, a dispute, administrative failure, or an attempt to

optimise cashflow through such deliberate action. So what is to be done? Legislation giving a statutory right to interest on late payment of debts will not solve the problem. In my experience, if a credit manager is under pressure to delay payment of bills, a law will not stop him: he will simply insist on longer payment terms from the start to avoid the risk of having to pay interest. By the same token, a dominant supplier would use the right to interest to secure short payment terms, thus leaving the small business squeezed between its customers and its suppliers.

What is needed is a change in business culture, education, not legislation — an approach that concentrates on raising awareness that it pays to pay promptly.

Larger companies are increasingly recognising that paying on time helps to develop a partnership with suppliers, with important benefits such as prompt delivery, good prices, better quality, and flexibility of response. In addition, there are administrative savings

to be made from a seamless payment system between customer and supplier. That is why the CBI launched the Prompt Payers Code and is backing the new British Standard for Payment Performance that seeks to bring together best practice among both suppliers and customers.

More can also be done to improve credit management among suppliers and the CBI is urging the Government, and Business Links, to provide credit management health checks for smaller businesses. Of course, if all else fails, business needs recourse to the law. But here it is not new legislation that is required, but better and speedier court procedures to obtain judgment and enforcement.

It is ironic that, with business clamouring for removal of regulation, the business community should be asking the Government to solve a problem that is primarily of its own making. We should be looking to clean up our own act rather than looking to Government to solve the problem for us. It is vital that we do not lose our heads and end up with legislation that could seriously hurt those of us running small businesses.

The author is chairman of the CBI Small and Medium Enterprise Council and group managing director of Contract Chemicals



Bonner: "culture change"

Use lottery proceeds for repair of IRA bomb damage

From Captain R.J. Husk
Sir, In 1994 following the IRA bomb in the City of London, the Government decided it would no longer meet the cost of repairs resulting from terrorist damage to businesses.

Since this date, organisations on the UK mainland have been obliged to insure against "terrorist" action through Pool-Re. In 1995, because there had been no terrorist action in the previous year, the charge for the year due to April 30, 1996 was set at

60 per cent of the Pool-Re premium with 40 per cent suspended. Now that extensive damage has resulted from the Docklands explosion, businesses will have to pay the suspended premium, plus of course the premium due to the forthcoming year. To obviate this might I suggest that money from the National Lottery is used to meet the whole cost of repairs and rebuilding arising from IRA action? Insurance companies would then have no excuse to levy further demands for Pool-Re

cover, and businesses which are struggling to recover from the recession would stand a far better chance of survival. Projects due to be financed by the National Lottery could be postponed with nothing like the damage from the cost of Pool-Re premiums. Such a scheme would show the country as a whole pulling together to counter the financial effects of IRA action. Yours faithfully, CAPTAIN R.J. HUSK, Royal Navy, 18 Sherlocks Road, SW6.

Paperwork generators

From Mr F. Hague

Sir, When public shares were privatised, my wife and I both applied for shares in order to obtain a reasonable allocation.

In the course, we applied to have the shares entered in joint names, thus saving additional paperwork in the way of cheques, reports etc.

British Gas sent a simple sheet of paper asking for our joint signatures by return, we received shares in joint names. Recently, we applied similarly to National Power and PowerGen. We received six forms, A4 size, asking for six signatures on each three sheets. Unfortunately, to save paper, I put both my wife's details and my own on one set of sheets, the result being a further six sheets to fill in again.

Comments please. Yours faithfully, F. HAGUE, 75 Woodland Drive, Anlaby, Hull, North Humberside.

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British industry 'under funded'

By Robert Miller

THE investment record in Britain is depressingly low compared with our major competitors, the deputy governor of the Bank of England told senior fund managers responsible for £350 billion of pension assets.

Howard Davies, formerly the director-general of the Confederation of British Industry, made his remarks yesterday on the opening day of the National Association of Pension Funds (NAPF) three-day investment conference in Eastbourne.

Mr Davies told delegates that not only was investment growth in the UK weaker than when we emerged from the recession in the early 1980s, but that Britain lagged behind its main industrial competitors. He said: "Over a lengthy period we have invested a lower proportion of GDP (gross domestic product) than our main industrial competitors."

He continued: "Over the last 30 years the UK average is around 18 per cent versus 22 per cent for France and Germany and around 30 per cent for Japan. Even the US share of investment has been slightly higher than the UK's."

Even though the economy is growing, Mr Davies added, "The bald figures would suggest that investment growth has been considerably weaker in this recovery than it was a decade ago." The worst aspect, he said, was that commercial construction had "not picked up at all".

Geoff Lindsey, chairman of the NAPF's Investment Committee, strongly defended the investment record of NAPF members. He said: "The problem is not one of institutional investors failing to invest in British companies."

He said that investment in the UK had tended to come from overseas companies. "Take the motor industry," he said. "We have seen huge investments running into billions of pounds in recent years. But where were the British companies?"



Sean O'Connor, chairman of Stoves, left, with John Crathorne, the chief executive, who yesterday unveiled a 13 per cent rise in their pre-tax profits to £1.5 million in the six months to December 2. Sales rose 24 per cent to £27.9 million. The cooker manufacturer is paying a maiden interim dividend of 1.7p out of earnings of 6.1p a share. The shares fell 20p, to 280p, compared with last summer's flotation price of 163p

MPs attack Tecs for 'modest' record on improving training

By Philip Barsett
INDUSTRIAL EDITOR

THE Government's business-led Training and Enterprise Councils have made only a "modest" contribution to improving training in Britain, an influential Commons committee said yesterday.

The all-party Commons Employment Select Committee called for radical changes to the business-dominated boards that run Tecs in Eng-

land and Wales. In a critical report, it said their impact on training has been less than was hoped for, and made clear it was "alarmed" at the measurement of Tecs' performance and the way they spend £1.7 billion of public money.

The findings and recommendations of the committee are only the latest criticism to be made of the Tecs, which were set up five years ago to change the way training is run in the UK. The Nolan

committee on standards in public life is expected shortly to increase pressure on Tecs by also recommending changes to their governing boards to make them more accountable.

Currently, Tecs — described by the committee as private-sector companies with a public role — have more than 750 business leaders on their governing boards, though the MPs said there were "difficulties in reconciling the need for

Government to exercise proper financial controls with the dynamism which Tecs were supposed to bring to the task of local regeneration".

In their report, the MPs concluded that Tecs had made a "modest contribution to the improvement of the system of training for the unemployed, and to the promotion of economic regeneration and enterprise within the local economy", and that "their performance in placing people

in work and gaining qualifications appears to reflect economic conditions, and not to overcome them".

Tecs, the committee said, have a wider problem: "As effectively monopoly contractors with the Government, they are comparatively immune to the competitive discipline of the private sector, and in some cases are slow to win the trust and confidence of local communities."

To overcome this, the committee urged the Government to abandon the founding principle that local business leaders who serve on Tecs' governing boards should be at company chairman and chief executive level. It proposed the Secretary of State appoint one business board member who is not a chairman or chief executive to allow the appointment of executives from larger national companies.

The Tecs' national council welcomed the "balanced and thoughtful" report, though Chris Humphries, policy director, said it could not support all the recommendations.

Zeneca plan to merge seeds business

By Philip Pangalos

ZENECA is in advanced talks to merge Zeneca Seeds with Royal VenderHave of The Netherlands, part of Suiker Unie, the farming co-operative group, to form a large international seeds joint venture.

The merged company, to be called Zeneca VenderHave, will be 50/50 owned by the groups. It will have annual

sales of about £300 million and be in the top five seed groups in the world.

Zeneca's 1,500 employees at its agricultural seeds business in Farnham, Surrey, will merge with Royal VenderHave's 1,000 employees to form a new business based at Kapelle in The Netherlands. An overlap may have an

implication for jobs, although Zeneca Seeds has about only 80 employees in the UK, with the remainder overseas.

The joint venture will bring together bioscience and commercial resources to reinforce existing strengths in agricultural crops such as sugarbeet, maize, oilseeds, grasses, cereals, and vegetables. Zeneca

Seeds now has annual worldwide sales of £150 million. It hopes to break even this year.

A spokesman for Zeneca said that the merged entity would have improved scope for profitability and strengthening its research and development base, marketing coverage, product span, and geographic spread.

BUSINESS ROUNDUP

My Kinda Town plans expansion

MY KINDA TOWN, the restaurants group that owns the Chicago Pizza Pie Factory, Chicago Meatpackers and Henry J Bean's Bar and Grill, is looking to expand further in spite of a 23 per cent drop in first-half profits. Tough trading conditions in France, exacerbated by strikes and terrorist incidents in Paris, are blamed for a fall in group pre-tax profits to £1.02 million (£1.33 million) in the six months to December 31. Turnover, boosted by six new openings, grew 19 per cent to £15.2 million. There was an exceptional charge of £121,000, relating to French closure provisions.

The company, which operates a total of 44 outlets in 14 countries, said it is on target for at least 12 openings in this financial year. It recently emerged that My Kinda Town will manage Capital Radio's new 300-seat, themed radio restaurant, which is due to open in London's Leicester Square by the end of the summer. The interim dividend is maintained at 1p and is payable on April 26, from earnings of 3.3p (4p) a share. *Tempus, page 26*

Wagon warning

SHARES in Wagon, the engineering company, dropped 32p to 389p yesterday after it delivered a warning that full-year profits would fall below expectations. The company, which specialises in precision springs for the automotive industry, blamed a fall in demand and difficulties in integrating recent acquisitions. However, John Hudson, the chief executive of Wagon, said that underlying demand levels were expected to improve. He added: "It is still expected that reasonable progress will be made and the group approaches the new financial year with confidence."

German firms gloomy

GERMAN industry yesterday gave its gloomiest forecast on the economy for years, saying that it expects almost no growth and a jump in unemployment this year. Presenting its spring survey of German industry, the Federation of Chambers of Commerce (DIHT) undercut the growth forecasts of the Bonn Government by predicting stagnation. Franz Schoser, DIHT managing director, said: "The economy has cooled off again. We see very slight growth this year at best. The economy will have great difficulty regaining momentum. ... the mood among firms has hit a low point." The government is predicting 1.5 per cent growth in gross domestic product.

TBI's £17m in sales

TBI, the London and Cardiff-based property investment and development company, has disposed of a further £17.4 million of property investments. The investments sold include the first disposal from the Molyneux portfolio, which was acquired at the end of December. The Molyneux property is the long leasehold interest in a Cheshire shopping centre, which has been sold to Asda, the Leeds-based supermarket group, and brings the total from disposals since the beginning of TBI's financial year last April to nearly £25 million.

Reuters wins award

REUTERS has won this year's award for the best annual report and accounts. Triple-Lloyd, the West-Midland engineering company, won the award for smaller companies. Richard Sykes, QC, chairman of the judges of the awards, which are sponsored by the Stock Exchange and the three chartered accountancy institutes, described the Reuters accounts as "full of facts and excitement" and praised the mass of material in the report's financial review. Although he thought the overall standard of reporting was "edging up", he said that many reports from smaller companies were "inept".

ACCOUNTANCY

Who will audit the auditors?

John Roques considers the needs of a body to oversee standards in the profession

Much time has been taken over the past few years over the arrangements for regulating and disciplining auditors. Several working parties have been set up and the most recent of these, chaired by Chris Swinson, is soon to issue its final report.

Some believe that this report will recommend that the disciplinary and regulatory activities of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales should be grouped under an office for professional standards, and that a new body should consider the extent to which the public interest is served.

It is also expected to recommend that the position of the Auditing Practices Board should be considered by a working party. If true, these proposals are largely a continuation of the past and are just bureaucratic — not a sound future for the profession.

There are three principles that must underlie any new system. First, it must be seen to provide the level of independence that the public has a right to expect. Second, it must eliminate the duplication of disciplinary effort by the Department of Trade and Industry and the Institute. Third, it must be free of unnecessary

levels of red tape for smaller audit firms. Most commentators also agree that practitioner-led regulation is more efficient so long as the public interest needs are met.

What solution would achieve these aims? Deloitte & Touche recommends that the whole organisation for regulating and disciplining "public interest entity" auditors should be supervised by the Financial Reporting Council, thus bringing the responsibility for controlling the development and enforcement of both accounting and auditing standards under one body.

The Auditing Practices Board would have an equivalent role to that of the Accounting Standards Board. A new disciplinary body, with powers not unlike those of the Review Panel, should take over the roles of both the Joint Disciplinary Scheme and inquiries made of professional firms by inspectors appointed by the DTI. This would meet the public expectation that all standard-setting, regulation and disciplinary activities should be dealt with under one umbrella. Independent of the institutes. The structure would be credible and have longevity as it builds on the considerable respect and stature which the Financial Reporting Council



John Roques lists three principles for any new system

has already established. Only by separating the public interest cases and applying the requisite level of investigation and action to such cases, will it be possible to avoid the non-public interest cases and small audit firms being weighed down with unnecessary red tape. The difficulties of defining public interest should not be used as an excuse for

keeping everything within one system. The profession's Joint Disciplinary Scheme has been applied to public-interest cases only for well over a decade.

Some argue that a fast-moving disciplinary panel would increase their litigation risks. There is an obvious response from those who seek fairness in these matters. In return for auditors sacrificing

the shelter of the institutes, the DTI should change the law to provide for limited liability partnerships in the UK and follow the lead of the US Congress by substituting a system of proportional liability for joint and several liability for auditors.

Will these proposals be adequate for those who wish to establish an SEC in the UK? The SEC is expensive regulation and dominated by lawyers rather than those involved in the practices of financial reporting and auditing. There is no evidence that 50 years of regulation by the SEC has solved the problem of audit standards in the United States. If a government determines to establish a companies commission, this would not be a disaster by itself, so long as it restricted its activity in the regulation of the accounting profession to oversight of the Financial Reporting Council.

Some are concerned that our views diminish the standing of the Institute. I disagree. I think this gives them the opportunity to develop further the facilities that should be seen as world-class centres of excellence.

If the audit faculty took on leadership in a coherent strategy to prevent and detect corporate fraud, then we would really be back on the road to eliminating the expectation gap and re-establishing the standing of the profession.

The author is Senior Partner, Deloitte & Touche

The issues are now out in the open

THERE were times during last week's mournful press briefing to announce the failure of the attempt to merge the English ICA and CIMA, the management accounting body, when you would have not been at all surprised to find both presidents breaking into the mode of the popular financial services advertisement and singing, "Let's face the music, and dance".

But, as events this week show, the real action, the positive work of the profession, continues unabated elsewhere. We have had a robust set of proposals from the Auditing Practices Board (APB), which redefine and clarify the strength of independent auditors; the opening of a tumultuous battle over the principles of financial reporting, and seen the Accounting Standards Board (ASB) under serious and sustained attack for the first time.

These are issues which are at the heart of what accountants are about, yet none of the debate or argument emanated from the English ICA. It might argue that this is not entirely truthful. The APB is an offshoot of the accountancy bodies, it could say. This is true. But the APB is

clinging desperately for freedom from the clanny and restrictive hand of its parent. The APB president, Ian Plaistowe, of Arthur Andersen, made no secret of this earlier in the week. "We have told the accountancy bodies that we don't believe we belong with you," he said. Rumours are rife of shouting matches between Plaistowe and the institute leadership. This cannot be pleasant. Plaistowe is more of a rapier than a bludgeon man. These are painful times for Moorgate Place. But the leadership in the audit world is coming from the APB. Ian Percy, its vice-chairman, said this week that "auditing is about governance, it is critical for the confidence in business operations, our capital markets and the public sector". That sounds like someone who has got his priorities right. Equally, the extraordinary attack on the ASB by Ernst & Young takes the debate over the future of financial reporting out into the open. But it is open ground, far from the English institute.

The debate is one which was dealt with in these pages when the ASB first published its Statement of Principles. Now Ernst & Young is having one final push. The press release dramatised the issue: "The future of UK financial reporting — our month to decide", it

was headed. This is not entirely true. Responses to the ASB's statement are indeed due in at the end of March. But that is not the end of the matter.

The argument has escalated. Nick Land, Ernst & Young's senior partner, has entered the fray. In the foreword to the firm's booklet, *Time to Decide*, he says that the ASB "seems to be pursuing a rather academic agenda of its own, unprompted by user demand, that envisages the abandonment of historical cost accounting in favour of a system based on current values".

"Any readers who recall the interminable debates over accounting for inflation, as the debate over historical versus current values was once termed, will grow inwardly at this point. It is an endless and fruitless debate. Ian Davidson, of Storehouse, who is no spring chicken himself, will tell you that his father was on one of the original working parties to debate the issue around the time that Everest was being conquered and Queen Elizabeth came to the throne. But the debate over current values will never be conquered. Sir David Tweedie, chairman of the ASB, will argue that theory no longer matters on that one. It is simply the logic of substance over form which dictates a change. "Items in the balance sheet should be genuine assets and genuine liabilities", he will say. Ron Paterson, Ernst & Young's technical partner, who wrote the booklet, argues that Tweedie is academic to an extreme. "We are driven," says Paterson, "to the Luddite end of the spectrum to counter Tweedie's radical extremes."

Maybe the heart of the matter can be seen in Nick Land's foreword. Referring to the ASB's principles he said: "Some of its proposals are theoretical to the point that they are scarcely comprehensible by most accountants and the language of business, is at risk of being taken over by the rhetoric of theorists."

It is possible, perhaps, to read between the lines here. Company directors are conservative and dislike new rules. Finance directors find it painful to confront them with Tweedie's new realities. There is commercial advantage in being an accounting firm that seems to support the harassed company director against the bogey of radical accounting theorists. Whatever the reasons, it is good to be back on serious ground again.



ROBERT BRUCE

TEN out of ten for sheer timing

SOMETIMES sheer accidents of timing do work out. Take the case of TEN, the television company that produces the monthly video-training package, *The Accountants' Channel*. Today sees publication of a polemic from Ernst & Young by its technical partner, Ron Paterson, seeking to rubbush the recent statement of principles issued by the Accounting

Standards Board, chaired by Sir David Tweedie. And what should be on TEN's latest video — a furious debate on the subject between Tweedie and Paterson.

Prickly dispute

Scottish accountants who know Paterson and Tweedie well will be relieved that they

are arguing over accounting matters. Normally it is the relative footballing merits, if any, of Patrick Thistle and Falkirk.

DTI in retreat

The Department of Trade and Industry was savaged by just about everybody in the accountancy profession last week after the publication of

the "Feasibility Investigation of Joint and Several Liability", particularly its negative approach to the possibility of allowing proportional liability. No surprise therefore to find the press office distancing itself: "It doesn't reflect our views. It's only a consultative document," seemed to be the line. Besieged accountants can probably breathe again.

Reed rescue

Sir George Vallings was chief executive of Cima until last June. Then he devoted his efforts to proposals to merge Cima with the English ICA, which were abandoned last week. So it was good news for him that he was appointed non-executive chairman of Reed Accountancy, the recruitment agency.

ROBERT BRUCE

ANY OTHER BUSINESS



FILM 1

Jane Austen proves the perfect balm for our troubled times, as *Sense and Sensibility* comes to the big screen



FILM 2

A look at the side of Edinburgh tourists never see in a gritty movie about heroin addicts, *Trainspotting*



FILM 3

... while *Casino* offers plenty of detail but not enough drama, as Scorsese goes behind the scenes in Las Vegas



TOMORROW

Meet Alanis Morissette, check out the latest albums, revisit the Brit Awards: all in Pop on Friday

THE ARTS

Frills, furbelows and the feelgood factor

CINEMA: In a good week for film, Geoff Brown finally hands the palm to *Sense and Sensibility*

Who said cinema does not reflect life's rich tapestry? This week you can watch hearts flutter and irony creep among bonnets, top hats and grazing sheep in the newest outbreak of Jane Austen fever, *Sense and Sensibility*. Edinburgh's finest drug users show their mettle injecting, puking and blasting out foul language in *Trainspotting*, while Martin Scorsese's eagerly awaited *Casino* basks in the violence lurking behind the glitter of Las Vegas.

True, this still leaves some areas of human activity unaccounted for, like the daily routine in a VAT office. But not everything can be cinematic. For a long time Austen herself was considered beyond the pale. All those elegant, curling sentences! All those social rituals of a bygone age! Hollywood has not shown an interest since the movie of *Pride and Prejudice*, made in 1940 during one of MGM's bouts of Anglomania.

But now Austen seems the perfect balm for our troubled times. There is no violence in *Sense and Sensibility*, beguilingly filmed by the Taiwanese director Ang Lee from a screenplay by Emma Thompson, unless you count the stumble in the rain that brings an Adams on horseback riding up to the susceptible Marianne and her strained ankle. There are no guns, no drugs, no ghetto kids. For frazzled urban audiences, *Sense and Sensibility* and its small-screen sisters are a return to a world that was clean, leafy and safe.

But the appeal reaches beyond mere nostalgia. Feminists may chafe at Austen's heroines, but in some ways her characters are made to order for the 1990s. The engines that drive her plots are money, property and status. In *Sense and Sensibility*, the Dashwood family faces social ruin when the father's death and the diversion of the inheritance to a stepbrother leaves them foundering without a home and on an annual income of £500.

The children of the Thatcher years appreciate such torments, and Lee, director of *The Wedding Banquet* and *Eat Drink Man Woman*, has assembled a cast that, by and large, subtly calibrates the

Sense and Sensibility
Curzon Mayfair
U, 136 mins
Defiant and radiant Jane Austen adaptation
Trainspotting
Warner West End
18, 90 mins
Abrasive junkie drama
Casino
Empire, 18, 178 mins
Scorsese hits Las Vegas

moods appropriate to a tale of hearts impulsive, hearts restrained, and money's lure. Thompson's dry wit finds a ready vehicle in Elinor, the eldest Dashwood daughter, the one who has sense, and whose heart is held in check. But the performance you notice comes from Kate Winslet (one of the bad girls in *Heavenly Creatures*). She bubbles delightfully as the impetuous Marianne, whose suitors include a brooding colonel (Alan Rickman, unusually restrained) and Greg Wise's Willoughby, the Adams of the ankle, ever ready with romantic patter.

Then there is Hugh Grant. "Why did we cast him? He's much prettier than I am," Thompson wrote in the diaries published with the screenplay. Whatever his charms, his bizarre performance as Edward Ferrars, Elinor's beau, is not their best advertisement. True, Austen states that Ferrars is diffident, but Grant's tongue-tied manner and physical bearing suggests someone smitten. Hair tousled, the head slightly cocked, the neck invisible between fashion's bouffant of "covert" tie and collar, a taxidermist could not have done better.

By exaggerating Ferrars' lack of social flair, Lee renders his romance with Elinor more shadowy than necessary. What, you keep thinking, could the spirited Elinor ever see in this man who belongs under a glass dome? This inflicts some damage as the film progresses. As the story winds from Sussex to Devon, to London and back, the material's limitations show. For an Austen film where characters' feelings really mat-

ter, you should choose *Persuasion*, based on her maturest last novel, not the featherweight *Sense and Sensibility*, based on her first.

Yet there is always something to relish, even after the film slides gently into a rut. Michael Coulter's slightly bleached photography is a constant joy, glorying in green fields, grey skies and the honey-coloured stones of country houses, without making a fetish of prettiness.

Working from Thompson's agile script (her first for cinema) Lee creates a film that moves like a gazelle. It takes a special confidence to be quiet and subtle in a movie financed by Hollywood, but Lee has the requisite gift.

INTERIOR. HORRIBLE TOILET. DAY. This is not from the script for *Sense and Sensibility*, but for *Trainspotting*. Here you are thrown into the lives of heroin addicts from the side of Edinburgh tourists never see: lives full of suppositories, needles, retching and vomiting, pain glasses dropped on to people's heads, and drug fiends descending into a toilet for their fix.

Although the sights may never be pretty, the tone, at least at first, is almost upbeat. "People think it's all about misery and desperation and death... but what they forget is the pleasure of it. Take the best orgasm you ever had, multiply it by a thousand and you're still nowhere near it," says Ewan McGregor's Renton, the leading character in a jumble of junkies, layabouts and psychos. The words come from Irvine Welsh's cult novel, packaged for the movies by the team that made *Shallow Grave*: writer John Hodge, director Danny Boyle and producer Andrew Macdonald.

That black comedy, however, was nothing next to this ferocious beast. Swerving madly, scene by scene, from realism to fantasy, driven forward by a pounding rock soundtrack, the film offers audiences no refuge. There is no condemnation of drug use, no matter how vile the consequences appear. Nor is there a strong plot to provide the comforts of fiction: Hodge's script retains the fragmentary quality of Welsh's novel, and we must fend for ourselves among the characters and striking images thrust before us.

Renton can at least reflect on his life and consider alternatives. Among the others, Spud (Ewan Bremner) is too spaced out to notice, while Begbie (Robert Carlyle) is consumed with psychopathic violence. Carlyle's unerring performance gives the film much of its punch and sense of danger. For young audiences willing to go with the flow, wherever it leads, *Trainspotting* offers an adrenalin rush, a sense of life ripped from the gutters, and the appeal of amorality. Those further on in life will admire the film's verve; may even relish observing behaviour rarely seen on British screens; but will totter out weary and numbed, ready for an early night.

Last but not least in this tumultuous week, we reach Martin Scorsese's *Casino*. Right at the beginning you know you are in for something grand when a car bomb explodes, flames leap up and a body falls through space to the sounds of Bach's *St Matthew Passion*. We seem to be mourning the end of the world — Robert De Niro's world, at any rate. He starts as a bookie, an associate of the Mob in Kansas City. When the bosses want a stake of Las Vegas in the early 1970s, De Niro, alias Sam "Ace" Rothstein, is sent to take control. By the end of the decade he is king of the Strip, until an unstable wife (Sharon Stone), a thuggish sidekick (Joe Pesci) and his own blind pride bring about his downfall.

You can tell from the urgent pace, the immaculate dove-



Emma Thompson, rapidly becoming a one-woman Hollywood hit machine, has been Oscar-nominated for both her acting in and her script for *Sense and Sensibility*. The wooden Hugh Grant, on the other hand, takes diffidence to tongue-tied extremes as her eventual soulmate

tail of shots, music and voiceover commentary, that a master director is at work. Scorsese means business. Unfortunately we have seen the business before, especially in *GoodFellas*, another epic of Mafia life splattered with violence and Pesci running amok. De Niro plays the grand seigneur, who exercises rigorous control over the gambling tables and struts in fancy clothes; Pesci's Nicky Santoro is the prancing demon who extracts information by putting a man's head in a vice. Both performances are a pleasure to watch, but their element of surprise has gone.

The surprise, instead, comes from Sharon Stone, who is called upon to act far more than usual and meets the challenge. When we first meet her character, Ginger McKenna, she's a gambling table vamp, luring big spenders. But as Rothstein's wife all her insecurities show: pills, the booze, and an unsavoury old flame (James Woods) bring her down, triggering the apocalypse with which the film opens.

But ultimately all characters — derived from life by Nicholas Pileggi, writer of *GoodFellas* — take second place to the sweeping depiction of Las Vegas at work. We see in fascinating detail how casino money is won, lost, sorted, packaged, diverted and skimmed. If the human drama carried the impact of the background detail, *Casino* would be a great picture; as the film stands, Scorsese is only half-way there.

by like costume drama, but I really got into it. Alan Rickman was tremendous — in fact, everything was great until Hugh Grant came in. He looked like he'd stepped off the set of *Four Weddings*. Celeste: Hugh Grant shouldn't have been in it otherwise a really good film. Jim: An opportunity missed: a strong story, but you didn't see enough of the countryside — it was all too tight. And there wasn't enough music.

TRAINSPOTTING
Idiot: A wham-bam, in-your-face-man, amazing film. This movie does not recognise any barriers. It's a real "now" film; it describes our times.
Celeste: The most stunning piece of work I've seen in the cinema for ages. Definitely for the young and open-minded, but go and see it.
Jim: Superb. It mixed humour with sadness. One moment you were disgusted by the characters, the next you were laughing at them. And the soundtrack was perfect; it added another dimension.

CASINO
Jim Irving, 22: Visually stunning and the actors were great. But too much voice-over, especially in the first hour.
Ashian Waheed, 21: I disagree. The narration added to what was already a brilliant film. Worth seeing just for Sharon Stone's frocks.
Idiot Goldberg, 28: If you've seen *GoodFellas* you don't want to see another movie that's exactly the same. Even the actors are the same.
Celeste Thomas, 18: An amazing film, and Sharon Stone is the best I've ever seen her. But three hours is too long.

SENSE AND SENSIBILITY
Ashian: I was bitterly disappointed. The screenplay is excellent, but Emma Thompson is too old for Hugh Grant; she could be his mother.
Idiot: I disagree. I don't usual-

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AND ACROSS THE COUNTRY



DESIGN

The memory of architect James Stirling is honoured in a new £20,000 prize for the profession



MUSIC 1

In this month of quartets, the Takács take the crown of glory with their Schubert cycle at the Wigmore Hall

THE TIMES ARTS



MUSIC 2

An enjoyable mix of Ravel, Berlioz and Sibelius, from Sir Simon Rattle and the CBSO



RADIO

Astronomers on the air waves? It's the type of programme Radio 4 does particularly well these days

Architecture has a new award, but will it stir up as much interest as the Turner or Booker? Marcus Binney reports

And may the best building win...

Architects are to have their own version of the Turner Prize. Big money, massive hype and — it is hoped — a deluge of press coverage leading up to the announcement.

The name is good: the Stirling Prize. It has the ring of sound money in your pocket and honours big Jim Stirling, whose star, at his sudden death, stood higher on the international scene than that of even Norman Foster or Richard Rogers. Not so at home perhaps, where his controversial History Library at Cambridge came close to demolition and his experimental housing in Roncorm was bulldozed to the cheers of locals.

But can architecture generate the kind of controversy that fuels the literary world's Booker Prize or the art world's Turner? To achieve this, you would need a shortlist consisting of Nigel Coates, Terry Farrell, Rodrick Cradick, Zaha Hadid, John Outram and Quinlan Terry. Then the British architectural scene would erupt.

You could say that in recent years British architecture has had more awards than there is space to report: the RIBA (Royal Institute of British Architects) Awards, the Royal Fine Art Commission/Sunday Times Building of the Year, the Financial Times Award and the Civic Trust Awards. On the international scene

architecture has bigger prizes still: the \$100,000 American Pritzker Prize, the \$250,000 Carlsberg and the Mies van der Rohe Pavilion Award. All these are for "lifetime achievement", although the recipient may be quite young. The appeal of the Stirling Prize is that it is for a single project.

The £20,000 Stirling Prize money may be smaller to the Booker and Turner, but the opportunity, for

'The appeal of the Stirling Prize is that it is for a single project'

although these are unlikely to win unless there is a substantial element of new work, Laurels are historically given to the big names. But the RIBA selectors are also good at spotting high-quality work by small practices around the country.

The Stirling award features a panel of judges, switching allegiance from the Royal Fine Art Commission to RIBA. A lack of the envelope calculation showed the switch meant that the sponsorship money could go as a single handsome prize to the architect, rather than being swallowed up in travel expenses, dinners and the like (and there is no need for the Fine Art Commission to despair, as RIBA has stepped in to fill the gap left by *The Sunday Times*).

The beauty of it is that RIBA does an extensive countrywide trawl for potential candidates

through its regional awards. The judges of the new Stirling Prize will be presented with a well-researched shortlist at no cost. And the judges have the right to add their own choices. But will it be controversial? That depends on the judges' propensity to speak out, even resign. Not much chance of that at present, as initially there may be just three: the president of RIBA, a representative of *The Sunday Times*, and one other. Out of this, just a fortnight will elapse between the announcement of the shortlist on November 7 and the award of the prize on November 21.

Stirling's widow feels passionately that the prize should help young, struggling architects. "They have a horrible time at the moment, really awful," she knows, too, the value of prizes to an architect's

career. "The Aluminium Prize which Jim received for the engineering department at Leicester University helped us to buy our first house." A sceptic could say that £20,000 might transform the career of a struggling author but mean little to a Foster, a Rogers or a Hopkins, and not a great deal to many architects after the money has been shared around the office, as in most cases it certainly deserves to be.

Chris Palmer of RIBA hits back: "£22,000 is the average annual earnings of the country's 28,000 practising architects. Kingsley Amis may have spent his Booker Prize money on new curtains and A.S. Byatt on a swimming pool. You won't catch an architect doing that."

The new award goes exclusively to architects but, with

many of today's adventurous high-tech buildings, engineers deserve to share the glory. Tony Hunt was the structural engineer for the RIBA Building of the Year in both 1994 and 1995, first for the Waterloo International Terminal and then for the Huddersfield Stadium. Hunt had the initial idea for the glass-and-steel span at Waterloo, and it was he who actually brought the architect, Nicholas Grimshaw, in on the job.

If the reputation of British architecture is flying higher than ever before, it is substantially due to the enormous pool of innovative talent in engineering practices. Ove Arup, founded by the great Sir Ove, the man who made the Sydney Opera House stand up, is the prime example.

Today, Arups has its own publicity machine and pro-

duces the best journal in the construction business. The reason is simple. It is widely known that Norman Foster is the architect of Stansted Airport, and that Renzo Piano designed Kansai Airport in Japan. Not many are aware that Arups were the engineers for both these athletic structures.

Chris Wise, an Arup high-flyer, says (only half-jokingly): "Today you will find more people here interested in the arts than science. Computers do the number crunching. To get the best jobs and attract talented people, we have to get recognition for our creative contribution."

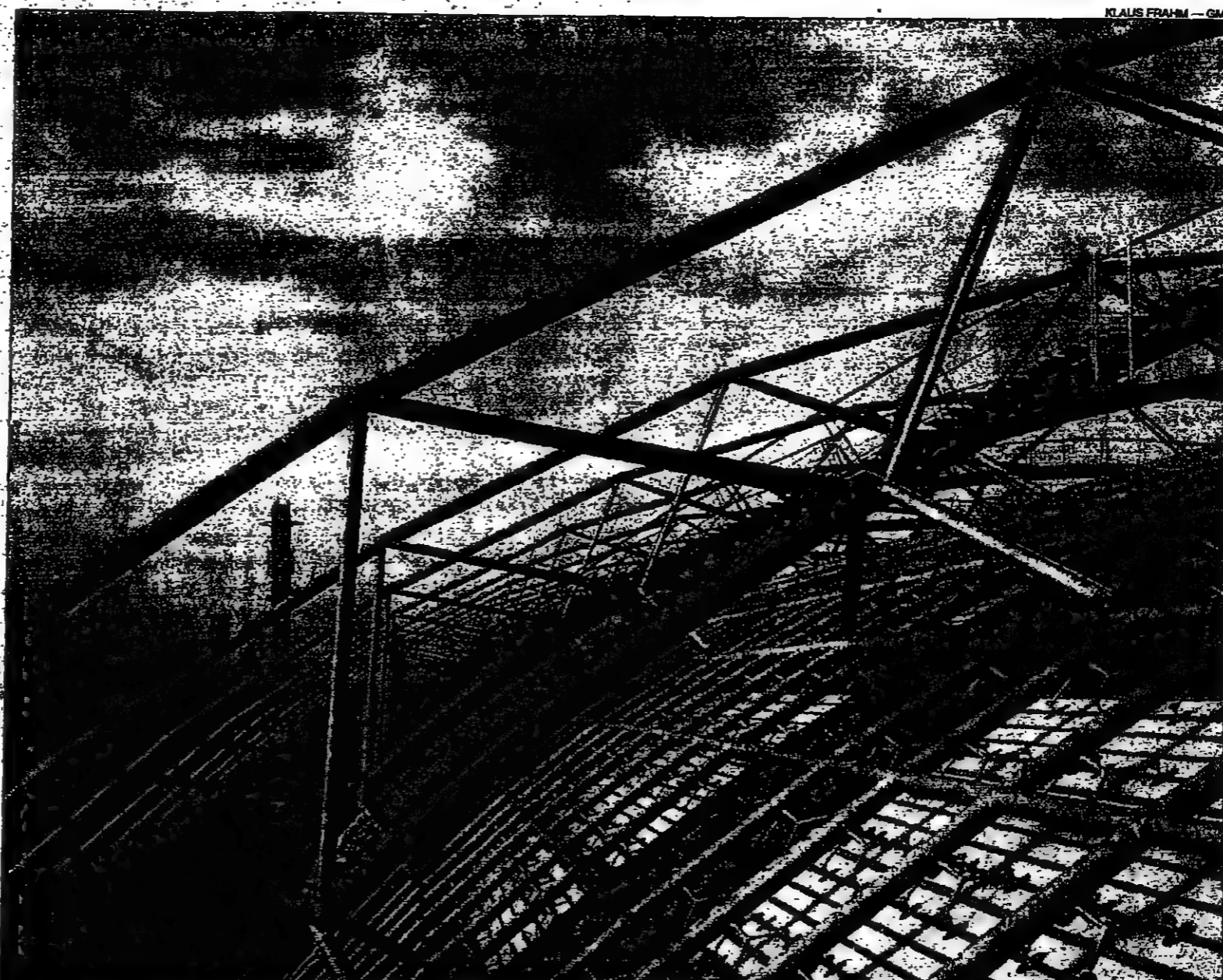
At present the Stirling Prize, like the RIBA Awards, is limited to buildings in Britain, but now so many British architects are winning commissions abroad that the net

should be extended to take in these buildings. Sir James Stirling's most acclaimed building, after all, was his Stuttgart Art Gallery.

Prime candidates would be Will Alsop's stupendous electric-blue regional government headquarters in Marseilles, completed last year, and Ian Ritchie's new glass-and-steel exhibition hall for the Leipzig Fair.

The key question is, will the Stirling Prize make a difference?

Here RIBA has the best answer. When the Lobb Partnership won the RIBA Building of the Year Award last year, they were anything but a household name. Since then they have rocketed to international stardom by winning the commission for the stadium for the Sydney Olympics in the year 2000.



Ian Ritchie's glass-and-steel exhibition hall in Leipzig would surely make him a contender for the prize, if projects outside Britain were eligible

Fusion for all

ADVANCE publicity for this gig, part of the New Directions in Urban Music Series, promised "a fusion of jazz, funk, soul, hip-hop, reggae and drum 'n' bass". The formality of the venue notwithstanding, such an adventurous mix of club sounds was exactly what singer Cleveland Watkiss and associates provided in two hours of loosely structured but hard-hitting music.

Despite a less than ringing introductory endorsement from Biyi Adepegba, the series' instigator — "don't blame me if you don't like it; I'm only the promoter" — drummer Mark Gilmore and electric tabla player Talvin Singh kickstarted the proceedings by producing, from a darkened stage, a pounding rhythm liberally embellished with

Cleveland Watkiss
Purcell Room

swirls and howls of electronic sound. Once a groove had been established, Watkiss's vocals began to glide smoothly over it, with saxophonist Steve Williamson contributing everything from subterranean rumbling to scabbling high-note runs. Effects and samples were provided by DJ La Rouge, and a heavy bass by Orah Angima.

For the two hour-long sets which followed, Watkiss — the Bobby McFerrin of urban club music — gently presided over an extraordinary *mélange* of sounds and textures, interspersing earnest appeals for universal peace and harmony with bouts of spacey scatting and cosmic crooning, and indulging in the odd virtuosic display of vigorous mouth percussion. But it was Gilmore's scurrying jungle rhythms, occasionally teasingly stumbling and tripping, but never losing their hectic momentum, which held the music together.

The informality and openness of the music, and the consequent lapses into self-indulgence by some participants, did result in the odd *longueur*. At times, too, the band's restless eclecticism shaded into somewhat arbitrary genre-hopping. Nevertheless, for sheer energy and originality it was hard to beat.

CHRIS PARKER

CONCERTS: Chamber with an electric charge; and brilliance with a big sound in Birmingham

In this extraordinary past month of Lindseys and Emersons, Borodins and Bergs, it has been the Takács Quartet who have taken the crown of glory. When they arrived at the Wigmore Hall for the start of their Schubert cycle (it continues on Saturday and returns in November), there was a palpable sense of expectancy in the air. And the quartet's capacity audience was rewarded by playing which at times reached the point where the music seemed to take on a life of its own.

One of these moments — and it was an extended one — was during the Quartet No 15 in G major. From that opening metamorphosis of minor into major to the strange Trio of the Scherzo, it was as if an electric current were being passed from one player to another. The Takács's *tour de force* was the slow movement, an intense and self-contained little *Winterreise* with its sharp splinters of melody, harmonic dislocations, and journeyman's tread.

Before the interval, the Takács had begun with the B-flat and E-flat major Quartets. The Takács leapt at the latter's merriment, creating a verita-

Four of a magic kind

ble family of activity, before the sustained song of the slow movement. Like the first, it showed the players' skill in creating a warm blend of textures within which four individual singing voices are still vividly and wonderfully heard.

The night before, at the Queen Elizabeth Hall, the Alban Berg Quartet of Vienna were celebrating their twenty-fifth anniversary. They are only four years older than the Takács, but sound almost twice that. In their venerable and deeply serious playing, the listener can almost feel the players putting themselves through their rigorous pieces, honing their intellects, one against another — and espe-

cially against the stern leadership of Günter Fichter. Unlike the Takács, who have a new leader, and the Emersons, who enterprisingly and enigmatically switch first and second violins, the Berg Quartet maintain their hierarchy. There were times, particularly in the slow movement of the Mozart Quartet in D minor, K421, when one longed to hear more of Gerhard Scholz's more warlike-hearted second violin, though the sheer sophistication of discourse in the first movement and the rigours of the finale could not but be admired.

Before a brilliantly conceived performance of Mozart's Quartet in G, K387, the Berg Quartet turned to Schindler and his Fourth Quartet. This was a magisterial and uncompromising performance of a long and concentrated work, its music dragged into being from outer darkness, almost against its will, buffeted this way and that through microtones and distant Slavic chants, only to end in what for Schindler and his writing, is a still unanswered question.

HILARY PINCH

A model tribute

When Ravel wrote his *Mother Goose*, between 1908 and 1910, all that was generally known in Europe of oriental music was the pentatonic scale which he uses with such wit in *Little Ugly*, *Empress of the Pagodas*. The cultures were then so alien to each other that it was inconceivable that anyone brought up in, say, China or Japan would ever be able to write Western music as sophisticated as anyone brought up in Germany or France. That, however, is what was achieved by Toru Takemitsu, who was born in Japan seven years before Ravel died and to whose memory Sir Simon Rattle and the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra dedicated their performance of *Mother Goose* on the day his death was announced.

Takemitsu, who derived much of his inspiration from modern French music, would have enjoyed it.

The first half of the concert in Symphony Hall was a demonstration model of Ber-

CBSO/Rattle
Symphony Hall,
Birmingham

lioz's *Le Corsaire* overture, featuring all the optional extras available to the conductor, and an extraordinary account of Sibelius's *Violin Concerto*. Sarah Chang's performance was remarkable not so much for the technical maturity worthy of a violinist twice the age of 15 as for its interpretative assurance and its physical relationship with the music. It is not often that an audience encounters both youthful freshness and the big sound, the poise and the brilliance normally developed after at least half a lifetime's experience. The occasional expressive exaggeration or uncertainty in ensemble was a welcome indication that she still has something to achieve and is not due for retirement just yet.

GERALD LARNER

Great heavens above

fascinating Radio 4 series called *Journeys into Space* and this one concerned astronomers not astrologers. But the manic enthusiasm so familiar in Patrick Moore is surely common to both disciplines.

Amateur astronomers are especially interesting because of the symbiotic relationship between the amateur and the professional. Amateurs are at astronomy what lottery money is becoming to the arrival of the ballast that keeps the ship afloat.

Even so, astronomers are easily mocked, what with all that stargazing from back gardens while the real world turns the balls come in and the guttering falls down. But *Starstruck*, made by Ruth Prince, was an affectionate documentary, which happily resisted the ribald. Amateurs such as George Alcock, doyen of the breed at 82, are the full-time eyes of astronomy and

their commitment makes a real contribution. Alcock has discovered several novae.

Starstruck is the type of programme Radio 4 does particularly well these days, introducing the variety of voices to the network that Liz Forgan advocated when she became managing director of network radio three years ago.

People misunderstood that desire, thinking that it meant Georgie newsreaders, and there was a predictable clamour from middle England. But

the Radio 4 audience is still there and its grumbles have always been part of its charm.

Forgan's influence in making Radio 3 react to the sampler-programming of Classic FM is more debatable, but her role in transforming Radios 2 and 5 has been unambiguously positive.

So in the week of her surprise resignation — not that an astrophysicist would have been surprised — *Starstruck* was not the only programme, and Radio 4 not the only network, to demonstrate that her legacy is an enriching one.

PETER BARNARD

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DESPERADO

IN THE WEST END NOW AND ACROSS THE COUNTRY FROM TOMORROW

Anatomising a rainbow's colours

Robin Renwick
on securing a
future for
South Africa

At midnight on February 1, 1990, F.W. de Klerk telephoned me to say that in the speech he would make to the South African Parliament the next day, we would not be disappointed. And neither we, nor the world, were disappointed. For he announced a constitutional revolution, unbanning the African National Congress and the South African Communist Party, leading, nine days later, to the release of Nelson Mandela. In doing so, de Klerk knew that he was paving the way for his own loss of power, though he calculated that in the first fully democratic phase of South African politics, the country would be ruled by a coalition including the National Party.

The epoch-making events that followed are not easily susceptible to being reduced to careful scholarly analysis, though that is what some of the most distinguished commentators on the South African scene — R.W. Johnson, Lawrence Schlemmer, Hermann Giliomee, Mervyn Frost and others — have attempted in this earnest and dispassionate collection of essays. The result is a work that needs to be read by serious students of South African politics, though it will hardly appeal to a wider audience. In the event, the election results could have been predicted intuitively rather than analytically, with the vast majority of black South Africans — the rural Zulus excepted — voting for the ANC, most whites rallying to de Klerk and the coloured population divided between the two.

There is no sign of this racial polarisation diminishing: the pattern is likely to be repeated in the next elections.

The authors analyse exhaustively the attitudes of the various sections of the population to the transition process. That, however, is already history. The last essay, of more compelling interest, addresses public attitudes to the problems facing the new Government and the supposed crisis of expectations. The findings, which are fascinating, will come as less of a surprise to long-term observers of African politics than to commentators who seek to attribute Western political attitudes to township dwellers or the rural population.

Far from expecting miracles from the new Government, these studies suggest African voters expect things to get better only very gradually. The overwhelming priority is employment and there is little enthusiasm for trade union militancy (if that means fewer jobs). Redistributive policies naturally are favoured by the bulk of the African population, but there is an understanding, in theory at least, that nothing can be achieved without economic growth.

This is coupled with an almost total lack of understanding of what actually may be needed to produce economic growth and a near-universal conviction that job creation and the satisfaction of virtually all other needs are the responsibility of



Bhambani, a poor township near Durban, April 14, 1994: most South African voters expect the new Government will improve the lives of such children only very gradually

LAUNCHING
DEMOCRACY IN
SOUTH AFRICA
The First Open Election,
April 1994
Edited by R.W. Johnson and
Lawrence Schlemmer
Yale, £19.95

government. This gap between a desired culture of entitlement and what government actually can be expected to provide is not so much dangerous as tragic. The South African Communist Party leader, Joe Slovo, spent the last part of his life exhorting township residents to discontinue the rent, mortgage and electricity payment boycotts which were a popular feature of the liberation struggle as, otherwise, no progress could be made towards resolving the housing problem, compounded by the fact that the population is continuing to increase at a rate of nearly one million a year.

If "liberation" is not to become a meaningless slogan for the bulk of the population, these issues have to be tackled. As President Mandela has pointed out, wage-earners in formal employment already are a privileged class in South Africa, and their interests do not coincide with

those attempting to gain access to employment. The new Government has been trying to redress this balance, but it will not find this easy to accomplish, as the unions are a powerful part of its constituency. It also is making a courageous effort to re-structure the South African economy, including instituting the partial privatisation of key state enterprises.

This study ends with a warning that "typically, first democratic governments fail". That certainly has been the case in much of the rest of Africa, where their first and most important failure has been in rapidly ceasing to be democratic. "All too frequently new elites attempt to consolidate their wealth and power in ways uncomfortably reminiscent of the ancient regime... A liberal democracy has been born, against all the odds, but it will be many years before this achievement is secure."

In other words, the struggle continues. Can South Africa avoid the fate that has overtaken most of the rest of Africa? I believe it can; but that is still to play for. These studies are marked by painstaking honesty — a quality rare in political commentary anywhere. The authors are to be congratulated for it.

Sir Robin Renwick was Ambassador to South Africa from 1987-91.

Tyranny was not invented in Stalin's Soviet Union, nor even in Enver Hoxha's fetid Albania, where Ismail Kadare for so long lived and wrote. Tyranny there was even long ago in Egypt, before the pyramids were built.

The Pyramid is Kadare's short new book. It is about Cheops and the distinctive stone structure for which the pharaoh is still famous. His is not a history book, although history clearly cloaks his tale. Fable, parable, storehouse of metaphors. The Pyramid is not a simple story. In its blueprint and its architecture, the book itself resembles closely the process of building a pyramid.

At the start it races with ideas and excitement, rather as Kadare describes the time of the conception of the pyramid to have been. Cheops and his fawning advisers envisage a project as useless to his subjects as it would be indispensable to the state. As the High Priest Hemiunu tells Cheops, "a pyramid, before serving the afterworld, has a function in this world."

That function is to enslave an entire population to the geometry of its hubris. Get them to build, to labour, hew stone, lay stone, polish and carve stone — year after year — until "their own bodies and their very faces" are siphoned upwards "by the celestial void".

Servant of the despot stone

Tunku Varadarajan

THE PYRAMID
By Ismail Kadare
Harvill, £14.99

It takes 22 years to build the pyramid, and the middle of the book shuffles, deliberately, at the stilted pace of a people ground down by hard labour. Kadare's "Chronicles" of the pyramid's construction are chiselled with careful and disconcerting detail: "One hundred and ninety-fifth stone. From El Bersheh quarry. Hoisting delay owing to suicide of dead stonemason Hapijefia." The eleven thousand three hundred and ninety-eight stones, from the Saggara quarry,

caused more or less the same number of deaths and mutilations as the previous stone.

As the pyramid rises, and deaths multiply, Cheops grows despondent. Why else was the monument being built but to receive, and mark, his death? Whereas he had had men first regularly punished on charges of delaying the building work, he now had them sentenced to death "for the opposite reason, because they had speeded the work up. Then again for the first reason. And thereafter for no reason at all."

But after the hecatombs, the tomb will not be denied its moment. The pyramid, which struck Egypt down for 22 years, now "demands its mummy". Cheops dies, his heart hollowed-out by self-pity, and the book enters its last phase. Climax and anti-climax cancel each other out at the pharaoh's death. There is instead a stillness, a void in which no questions are asked. Then suddenly, there is a crumbling of history. Grave-robbers, necessary nihilists in the "post-pyramidal" epoch, profane a series of smaller royal tombs. Cheops's pyramid alone stands untouched and unrobbed, a mocking monument that outlasts those who question its "unchanging lordship". And, Kadare asks, does not the pyramid mock us still today?

Smoke and water

A poem in Sean O'Brien's previous book begins: "You are trying to work but you sit/ With the wrong book entirely: Lost Railways/ England/ Whose dust of the forties, the fifties/ Is making you sneeze." The subject is back to haunt him in *Ghost Train*, a strikingly unified and successful book of poems that — deservedly — won him the Forward Prize in 1995.

Trains provide O'Brien with an observation platform for the condition of the country; a jaunty and rickety three-syllable metrical unit that becomes as hypnotic as rails: an endless supply of phrases and metaphors; an atmosphere of mischievous nostalgia; a panoramic outlook that seems to lead, invariably, to the vanishing-point where everything goes up in smoke.

It isn't a literal journey that O'Brien takes you on, it is synthetic and arranged and quite possibly — ghost train — not happening at all. Repeatedly harking back to the 1940s and 1950s, O'Brien produces a version of the country as *trompe l'oeil*. Details fly past, solid-seeming, but concealed into twists of impossibility, as chimeric as the writing which describes itself as "poetry that steps outside the book". O'Brien's conception is so original that he is really only

Michael Hofmann

GHOST TRAIN
By Sean O'Brien
OUP, £5.99

SWIMMING IN THE FLOOD
By John Burnside
Cape, £7

minimally indebted to other poets here. However, I would offer England's unluckiest metaphysician, Hugo Williams, occasional traces of the robust Tony Harrison: and possibly something smoother and more sinuous, like the American poet Richard Wilbur's long poem *Walking to Sleep*. More important than any of these is the work of the late Donald Davie, with its phenomenological shuffling between past and present, its rain and songs and wishfulness and air of *féy* pursuit.

Ghost Train is as impressive a book as I have read in years, idiosyncratic, beautiful and shrewd. For a similarly compact and distinctive statement, I think I would have to go back to *Why Brownlee Left* (1981) by Paul Muldoon, or *Katerina Brac* (1985) by Christopher Reid. It is a book that will tell future generations about us, and marks Sean O'Brien's arrival as an important poet.

Similar claims have been made for John Burnside, like O'Brien a poet in his early forties, but on the basis of *Swimming in the Flood*, already his fifth book, I wouldn't support them. Burnside too offers an idea of a book of poems as something unified: water, death and rebirth are his themes here, but it is less interesting, less innovative and much less well-written.

So many of the poems here follow the same blueprint that it is tempting to try to describe the blueprint. A theme is announced, and then the poem rushes to bury itself in a list; a second theme is introduced, with further listing; a final section brings the two into some relation. Burnside at least is not a murky poet but the clarity in which he operates leaves him dreadfully exposed. Clarity is good if you have something else to offer, like thought or originality. Burnside is actually a verbal type of poet, only he is thin, unconvincing and not particularly good.

In *Swimming in the Flood*, Burnside is interested in frightening and disgusting the reader, with poems about murdered girls and so forth. There is a kind of pornographic chill in these poems that I find wholly exceptional. Just as exceptional in its way is the predictable upward curve of redemption at the end of the book, "the hard bud splitting through ice/ and the nailed palm healing".

Tom Bower on Nick Leeson's financial exploits; WH Smith Fresh Talent 1996 — new novels, new authors; Lynne Truss delights in a biography of Mike Leigh, cinematic iconoclast; plus children's books and paperbacks

Defined by the absence of peace

Roy Foster

A MILITARY HISTORY OF IRELAND
Edited by Thomas Barfield and Keith Jeffery
Cambridge University Press, £40

"Militarism," observes a contributor to this fine collection of essays, "was one of the few Irish stereotypes which evoked almost universal approbation" in the early 1900s: this holds good throughout much of Irish history. Natural bellicosity has been claimed as a characteristic of Irish fighters from mythical heroes to the IRA past and present. Generally this is assumed to be an attribute of distinction.

Leaving this knotty question aside, this propensity is certainly allied to a society and a history which is generally supposed to have seen more than its fair share of violence. Colonisation and government by an unrepresentative elite necessitated a military presence: in 1795 Burke scoffed at high-falutin' talk about the Irish constitution, pointing out that it consisted of the three orders of "cavalry, infantry and artillery".

However, militarism was built into the structure of Gaelic society before Norman adventurism arrived: Irish society in the plantation era was characterised by the mustering of militias on one side, and hillside guerrilla activity on the other. In the 1640s, four separate armies ravaged the island; subsequently émigré Irish soldiers rose to fame all over the world. The 18th century saw the development of an army establishment (shown here by Alan Guy as impressively ramshackle) which would throughout the subsequent era be invoked in aid of the civil power. Finally, the last decades of the Union saw private armies north and south, guerrilla campaigns, military reprisals and civil war: the fighting Irish indeed. But there is more to military tradition than simply constant

war (or "the absence of peace"), as the editors delicately put in the intimate relationship between the British Army and its disproportionately large content of Irishmen; the influence of garrison life on domestic Irish social culture; the complex tensions between militia and yeomanry forces, and the communities from whom they were raised; the enormous importance for modern Irish history of the First World War; and the surprising fact that for most of the 19th and 20th centuries, all this military preoccupation was being exercised on behalf of a country which remained, for the most part, extremely peaceable.

All these issues find treatment in this rich collection by diverse hands. There are inevitably lacunae and the chapters are varied in length and depth of treatment — but not in quality, which is consistently high. Above all, the approach takes military history away from the obsessive train-spotting tendency too often associated with it, and into social history. Katharine Simms, in a marvellous survey of Gaelic warfare in the Middle Ages, urbanely reconstructs the "traditional quasi-berserker hairstyle affected by those whose lives were dedicated to rapine and murder" and relates it to 13th-century dresscodes. Edward Spier traces the impor-



A statue of Queen Victoria removed from Dublin, 1946

tance of Irishmen in the Victorian army not only through statistics, but in terms of psychology and mentality. David Fitzpatrick finds a former Chief of Staff of the Irish Army in the 1950s who owes his training to the Royal Engineers as well as to an IRA flying column, and remarks that Ireland had been "terribly foolish not to take Home Rule when it was offered to us".

The book's sweep extends from the early medieval period, authoritatively surveyed by Thomas Charles-Edwards, and proceeds through a detailed consideration of military and other matters in the plantation era by Claran Bra-

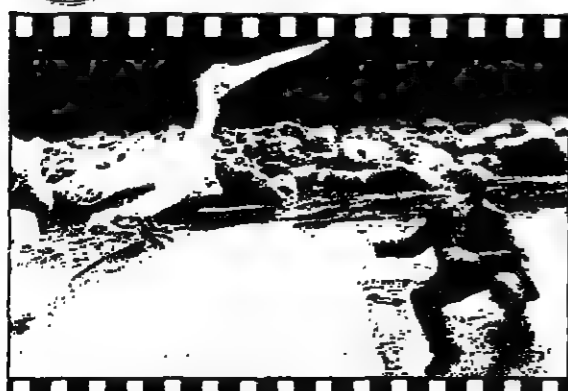
notable by their absence). And military matters in Northern Ireland are kept for a few pages of the final chapter.

Some essays, such as Bartlett's masterly study of repression and rebellion in the 1790s, are necessarily cast in narrative form; others opt for thematic treatments (David Miller resourcefully converts "Non-professional Soldiers, c. 1600-1800" into a challenging discussion of the origins of nationalism). That old chestnut, Maud Gonne's claim that her campaign against the Boer War halted recruitment (obediently accepted by her biographers) is just one cliché drily deflated by statistics.

Miller, in similar vein, presents us with the real duties of those Volunteer corps raised in the 1770s and presented in textbooks as the proto-nationalist harbingers of parliamentary independence: much more typically they repressed agrarian agitators, guarded shipwrecks, enforced laws against trade combinations, protected soldiers from mob violence, and confiscated arms. It may not be magnificent, but it seems much nearer to real life.

The editors deserve a 21-gun salute: not only for exemplary scholarship, accessibility and accuracy, imaginative illustrations and quizzical introduction, but for the impartial generosity with which they approach the tangled ambiguities of the subject. It is best epitomised by the dedication: to four Irishmen, their own forebears, who 80-odd years ago were serving valiantly in the Royal Garrison Artillery, the Belfast IRA, the Durham Light Infantry and the Canadian Machine Gun Corps. This makes its point no less profoundly for its lack of fanfare: and the same is true for the book as a whole.

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Roger Scruton on Conor Cruise O'Brien, an apostle of the Enlightenment whose latest work reveals the uncertainty of his beliefs

Yes, the best do lack conviction

ON THE EVE OF THE MILLENNIUM
By Conor Cruise O'Brien
Free Press, £7.99

Conor Cruise O'Brien's reflections on the millennium, here collected in a short book, were first delivered as lectures in distant outposts of the civilisation which measures its millennia from the birth of Christ. Like many of O'Brien's recent writings, they display a deep uncertainty. He wishes to offer a passionate defence of the Enlightenment and its liberal values; but is aware that one of the first political gifts of the Enlightenment was the terrorism of the French Revolution, and that this terrorism has a nasty habit of reappearing whenever the Enlightenment vision of man, as the creator of his own destiny, seizes the political imagination.

the gutter press, and about the media, which are rapidly sinking to the moral and intellectual level of their lowest customers.

But he seems to have no clear idea of how we might improve our inherited ways of governing ourselves. This apostle of the Enlightenment begins by quoting and endorsing Yeats's *Second Coming*, and ends (more or less) with a penetrating eulogium of Edmund Burke. Since he finds no one to admire very much besides these two great Irishmen, it is surely hard to resist the conclusion that he secretly agrees with the thing they stood for — which is the repudiation of the Enlightenment view of man.

Indeed, there are two ways of reading O'Brien: first as a progressive and slightly cynical liberal, who laments the fact that the

ignorant and the superstitious gain power; secondly, as a melancholy conservative, who knows that the hopes vested in human nature by liberals are largely futile, and that people need order, tradition and religion far more than they need a choice of lifestyle.

I find the second O'Brien more appealing, partly because he is, in this character, hesitant, circumspect, and aware of the complexity of the matters about which he writes. The first O'Brien has a tendency to jump to conclusions — sometimes rather crazy conclusions, as in the first essay in the book, which informs the reader of a massive worldwide counter-Enlightenment plot, with the Pope scheming to form an alliance between Christianity and militant Islam against people like O'Brien. (The only piece of concrete evidence that is cited for this extraordinary idea is a reported announcement on Libyan radio, which is apparently



O'Brien: scourge of political correctness

privity to Vatican thinking in the matter.)

The second O'Brien is apparent in an essay on the Millennium Commission, the quango which empowers a body of people wholly unqualified for any such task, to

propel our country into the next thousand years. His scorn for this idea prompts him to ask why no churchman or religious leader sits on the commission, when the millennium has little meaning apart from that provided by the Christian calendar.

In this and other essays O'Brien notes how hollow such public statements and ceremonies are, when voided of their religious content. But this does not prevent the first O'Brien from scoffing at the "prayer breakfasts" of American presidents, having himself been invited to one, and being impatient to share with his reader the snobbish amusement that liberals tend to feel on such occasions.

Perhaps the most useful passages in the book are those in which the second, conservative O'Brien addresses the question of America. As he rightly says, the United States is "the only country committed to the Enlightenment

tradition emotionally as well as intellectually. That tradition is part and parcel of the American civil religion". While attempting to debunk Jefferson, one of the first high priests of this civil religion, O'Brien recognises that the American belief in constitutional government provides a powerful bulwark against social decay. He castigates "political correctness" as an attempt to reject not only the American civil religion, but also the Western culture from which it springs. And he warns us that, without respect for tradition, order and the higher life, democracy will be deprived of the correctives that will enable it to survive.

All that is true. Of course, it has been said before — by Burke, to whom O'Brien refers, and by Tocqueville, but maybe it is worth saying again in the brisk, impatient prose that O'Brien seems to favour. There is no denying, however, that although O'Brien is fishing in deep waters, he treads a great amount of firm ground.

Those who weight their nets with the heavier products of German philosophy will have an

explanation for this; but even they will find it difficult to understand how an intelligent, cultivated and sophisticated statesman should spend quite so much energy in vilifying Pope John Paul II, whose only crime seems to be that he actually believes what the Church has always preached concerning birth control. Even an enlightened liberal ought to concede that the elevation of such a person to the throne of St Peter might serve a useful purpose, at a time when no spiritual force comparable to the Roman Catholic religion stood against communism.

And you do not have to agree with the Pope's views on birth control in order to recognize the social catastrophe that is threatened when sex is divorced entirely from the conception and care of children. I mention these problems partly because, in my view, you cannot really understand the modern world if you do not explore the moral reality of communist collectivism on the one hand, and sexual liberation on the other. These two forces have shaped the modern consciousness, and left a legacy of spiritual emptiness which O'Brien senses, but for which he has no words.

On a slow train through China

Just another mundane day in China, and five people are executed by firing squad. Counter-terrorists, including two Taiwanese, are shot in the back of the head. Another report says that new buildings around the busy airport on Hainan Island are so tall they are a hazard to aircraft, so night flights have been suspended. One construction is 175 feet higher than safety regulations permit; perhaps the police or army have a financial interest, so it is difficult to have it demolished. These are just two random items from a newspaper on a recent typical day.

China now is a confused mix of chaos and control, puritanism and decadence, savage punishment and the turning of a blind eye to corruption. It all depends on your *guanxi* or "connections". It is also a time of uneasy transition between generations, with a few questions being put about the country's direction. It is difficult to find answers to the problems of almost one quarter of the planet's population, difficult even to know the questions to ask. John Gittings's book does not pro-

James Pringle

REAL CHINA
From Cannibalism To
Karaoke

By John Gittings
Simon & Schuster, £15.99

vide the answers but at least it poses the proper questions.

On extended trips on the Yangtze River last year, to report on the controversial Three Gorges Dam project, a huge hydroelectric scheme that will displace more than a million people, this reviewer found Chinese on river boats ready to talk about their worries freely, confident there were few snoopers around. The contrast with Peking, where people generally keep their own counsel, was startling. A member of the editorial board of *The Guardian*, Gittings likes to do his talking on trains for, as he says: "Fellow passengers discuss their own affairs and reflect on China's future with a candour they would normally avoid."

In his efforts to find out where China is heading, Gittings explores the villages and towns of what he calls Middle China, and takes the reader on a north-south procession through the provinces of Henan, Hubei, Hunan, Guanzhi, Guangdong and free-wheeling Hainan using the little-known Second North-South Railway Trunk Line. Wisely, Gittings avoids Peking, not just because of harsh memories of what he saw at Tiananmen Square when he reported the violent suppression of pro-democracy demonstrators in June 1989, but because, he says, Peking no longer seems relevant to the questions about China which need to be asked.

Residents believe there would be another reason for skirting Peking. With the clampdown on any kind of political opening since 1989, diplomats, academics and correspondents there know even less about the happenings within the leadership than they did in the 1970s, when reliable figures could be interviewed, and the mid-1980s, when reliable liberals such as the late party chief Hu Yaobang and



Relief image of a Buddhist "world guardian" at the entrance to a cave in Longmen, China (c AD 700); from *The Arts of China to AD 900* by William Watson (Yale, £50)

his disgraced successor, Zhao Ziyang were in the ascendancy. Chinese these days are equally in the dark. As Gittings remarks: "Most Chinese are far better informed about the state of British football than that of their own politics."

Encouragingly, he does find, however, a small core of critical intelligentsia, particularly among some younger journalists, social scientists and members of the new legal profession. "But they still have to operate," he says, "within a system which is not only dominated, as before, by the Party bureaucracy but which has been enriched by the economic reforms and is now closely meshed with the expanding entrepreneurial interests of the armed forces." Not

much scope, one fears, for too much new thinking emerging among these handicaps.

Gittings has the reporter's own inflated sense of his photographic skills; the cover picture, which he shot himself, is insipid, hardly reflecting the vibrant sense of China today. His volume is part travel book on the byways of central China, part social investigation. Sometimes it is slightly dated. But especially evocative is his chilling visit to the town of Wuxian in Guangxi to investigate "an obscure footnote to the Cultural Revolution", the reports of cannibalism, a subject that makes Chinese officials even now cringe, then angrily retort. But Gittings finds it surprisingly easy to confirm, and this is the most detailed account this

reviewer has seen of these horrific events. His final chapter, "Where is China headed?" contains much thoughtful political analysis on what may lie ahead in the millennium.

The bottom line, however, is that no one knows where China is heading beyond the death of the now-embellished senior leader Deng Xiaoping — not even Jiang Zemin, the current party boss who projects himself as the "core" of the new leadership. Gittings does not pretend to enlighten us on this, but, on his endless train journeys, he has obviously thought long about it, and his book is a vital description of the heartland of China — and how that may emerge from there could affect us all — on the very eve of the millennium.

NINETIES nihilism and *fin-de-siècle* angst are commonplace themes for writers these days. Yet, standing out in sharp relief from this vast array of pessimistic fiction is *Omniophobia*, R. H. W. Dillard's recent collection of short stories.

Dillard, professor of English at Hollins College, Virginia, is above all a craftsman of language. His rich, highly wrought prose draws the reader into a grotesque caricature of modern society that is at once absurdly exaggerated and frighteningly recognisable; as the title suggests, the theme of fear permeates the three novellas and four stories in diverse and imaginative manifestations.

The first novella, *The Bog*, consists of the notebook scribbles of Dr Cosmo Coswald, a professor of philosophy determined to refute Darwinian theories by proving that he can control the world through his will. Unfortunately, his mental exertions are distracted by the arrival of Sara Band, the only female scholar at his remote research institute, and an aggressive feminist with a voracious sexual appetite. Cosmo's unwilling fixation with Sara, and his efforts to gain control not only over his experiments but also over the forces of sexual desire are at first hilarious, but as both his work and his mind gradually disintegrate, fear creeps insidiously into the tale.

THE BOG juxtaposes a display of wide-ranging academic scholarship with an incisive observation of everyday detail: a contrast which resurfaces in the other stories. It emphasises the gulf between our intellectual potential and our animal appetites; a theme which evidently fascinates Dillard and is explored more fully in *The Death Eater*. This

Fear with a Southern accent

Stephanie Merritt

OMNIPHOBIA
By R. H. W. Dillard
Louisiana State University Press, £21.95

breathless, stream-of-consciousness narrative is the internal monologue of a diner chef who is both obsessed and repulsed by the sight of his obese customers devouring their greasy food. His disgust eventually provokes a chilling reaction.

The second section of the book is a parody of the

literature of the American South, and the culture which produced it. Dillard evokes a vivid and palpable sense of place in his cinematic attention to detail: themes traditional in the literature of the South, particularly of racial prejudice, are reinvented with a modern, ironic twist. But the fears of death, sex and madness, and the sense of emptiness and futility familiar to these stories, are only just beneath the surface.

Not all the stories are of a consistent quality. The disjointed narrative of *The Butterfat Boy* is confusing and its characters unidentifiable;

Their Wedding Journey is an attempt to introduce an element of the supernatural that is both unconvincing and incongruous with the rest of the collection.

But the final eponymous novella draws together the preoccupations of all the preceding stories in its four, interwoven voices. Dillard, who has previously published five volumes of poetry, uses the lyrics of a punk singer as a vehicle for his poetic talent; the songs acknowledge the nihilistic spirit that has been latent throughout the book, and is increasingly identified as the prevalent *Zeitgeist* of our society.

Omniophobia is not a cheerful book, but it is immensely funny, provocative and ultimately optimistic. Beneath its hyperbole and apocalyptic vision is a deeply affectionate portrayal of what it means to be human — Dillard recognises an inherent determination and courage as well as fears and fragility.



Lone ranger: *Untitled Film Still 48*, photographed by Cindy Sherman, 1979, from *Face Values — American Portraits* by Donna De Salvo (Flammarion, £20)

A mutual liking for war

Richard Owen

ISLAM AND THE MYTH OF CONFRONTATION
By Fred Halliday
IB Tauris, £35

Is there an Islamic threat to the West? Fred Halliday thinks not. He does not underestimate the danger from bombs on the Paris Metro or Islamic terrorists plotting in London. But he takes issue with Samuel Huntington, who in a celebrated article in *Foreign Affairs* in 1993 predicted that the end of the Cold War confrontation between capitalism and communism would be followed by further "clashes of civilisations", notably between the West and Islam.

Halliday argues in this lucid and challenging riposte that violent acts committed against Western or any other targets have their roots in the social and economic conditions of particular Third World countries, rather than in some vaguely menacing concept labelled "Islam". In other words, if Algerian extremists bring the streets of civil war to the streets of European cities, we should look for the causes in Algerian history and politics rather than in the Koran.

Halliday rejects the "common assumption" that the Middle East is in some sense unique. Islam, he suggests, is not a monolithic unit but a religion espousing "clear doctrines, a system of belief about the supernatural, and related questions of morality, destiny and meaning". Most issues and conflicts thought of as peculiar to the Middle East — oil prices, nuclear weapons, territorial disputes — are at heart secular and have nothing to do with the fact that the majority of the region's inhabitants are Muslim.

This is well put, and obviously true, as far as it goes. It is clearly false to suppose that the Islamic world forms a monolith: the Gulf War

be seen as a typical Third World product of colonialism, which affected "every country on the southern Mediterranean shore". Elsewhere he writes: "The Middle East is not unique, except possibly in the content of the myths that are propagated about it, from within and without."

But here the polemic goes too far. Halliday himself acknowledges that Zionism was — and is — a "unique factor" in the Palestine equation. The explosive mixture of religious fanaticism, nationalism and willingness to shed blood for land is not unique to the Holy Land, but it is qualitatively different there. Palestine is not just another Third World problem; the myths of the Middle East exist because the Middle East believes them about itself.

Halliday, who is Professor of International Relations at

Leeds, which find echoes in the Third World. This approach perhaps leads him to underestimate the extent to which leaders in "the Muslim world" see themselves as ranged against a hostile and uncomprehending West bent on undermining Islamic values.

Radical Islamic philosophers such as al Turabi in Sudan or al Madani in Algeria would disagree with his contention that there are "no special nations, no eternal missions". The concept of the "Arab nation" is still strong, and draws on the desire of ordinary Arabs to believe that they are indeed "special". The idea of a coming confrontation between Islam and the West is promoted as much in the Muslim world as in the West, perhaps more so.

Towards the end of this perceptive study Halliday offers a dissection of "Orientalism", the notion — popularised by Edward Said, among others — that the West has, through colonial nostalgia and the arts, created an "Orient" which only exists in the Western imagination. As Halliday points out, the Middle East is on Europe's doorstep, and has impinged on the Western consciousness ever since the Crusades. On the other hand, he is surely right to add that Islamic propagandists are also prone to myth making and self-delusion, and "the combined strength of the Islamic world is far less than that of the West" — always assuming the Islamic nations could sink their differences long enough to combine, which is highly unlikely. The only safe prediction, pace Huntington, is that Islam — however defined — is likely to fascinate the Western mind for some time to come.

"The Omniscient" in *ta'liq*:
The Splendour of Islamic Calligraphy (T & H, £35)

the LSE and author of the acclaimed *Making of the Second Cold War*, freely admits that his perceptions stem from his former attachment to Marxism, his interest in "liberation movements", and his own roots in Ireland, whose history has elements — foreign domination, nationalism, the "corrosive myths of deliverance through military struggle

[illegible]

THE 1930s

POSTAL NEW E

Travel stress brings boom to health clubs

RAPID growth in business travel has provided a lucrative spin-off for health farms as companies try to prevent hard-working executives from suffering travel-related stress.

Health clubs are fully booked throughout the spring and discounts and special deals have been almost eliminated.

Gillie Turner, group marketing manager for the Champneys group of health resorts, said: "During the recession, executives lost many of their extra benefits as

companies cut back. Now they are being restored as industry realises that the health of their executives is vital.

"They also seem to have decided that it is no good sending someone to Spain as an incentive or reward because they will simply eat too much and flop on to a beach. Instead, they want executives to become fitter so that they can do even more for the company in the future."

Now Champneys, acknowledged as the market leader, is planning to introduce a special

course costing £1,200 per person for a three-day break.

Executives will be given massages and health treatments, workouts and a range of talks on how to combat stress, especially when travelling. Other health resorts are introducing similar schemes.

"Because of the cuts made during the recession, most business travellers find that they are having to do the work which two people did even a

year ago," said Jonathan Stapleton, general manager of Champneys. "Companies have, therefore, decided it is worthwhile paying for their senior executives to take a proper break and get advice on how to combat stress."

Clare Brandish, the sales and marketing director of Ragdale health spa in Leicestershire, and an official of the ten-member Federation of British Health Farms, said that the number of professional

als going to health resorts has increased sharply.

"Whereas a few years ago it was mainly housewives wanting to come to slim, it is now working women with their own businesses who feel the need to de-stress. All our members agree to a policy of no children, no mobile phones, and no conferences."

It has been calculated that about 40 million working days are lost each year because of stress, ten times as many as are lost to industrial disputes. Much of the problem is caused

by long periods away from home, irregular hours, business entertaining and jetlag.

According to the Guild of Business Travel Agents, sales of business-class airline tickets have risen by 12 per cent in the past year, hotel bookings have gone up by 36 per cent and car hire has risen by 24 per cent.

"The trouble is that the same number of people are being asked to travel more often," said David Reynolds, the GBTA chief executive. "No wonder they need to take a break in a health spa."

US tourists defy IRA to visit Britain

By HARVEY ELLIOTT

AMERICAN visitors are ignoring the threat of IRA bombs in London and booking holidays to Britain in record numbers.

Despite fears that the recent spate of terrorist bombings would put off notoriously fickle American travellers from coming to Britain this year, inbound tour operators and tourism officials in the United States have handled more inquiries than ever, and they report that only a tiny minority of potential visitors has mentioned the bombings.

On Tuesday, the first full working day since the Aldwych bus explosion, the British Tourist Authority in New York handled 1,521 telephone calls from potential visitors.

"This compared with 1,269 who rang on the Friday before the first bomb at Canary Wharf," said Jeff Hamblin, the BTA's general manager in America. "Only 25 callers on Wednesday referred to the safety aspects of making the journey and nobody actually cancelled."

"A small number of big tour groups have decided to change their itineraries and stay in the countryside rather than in the centre of London, but again none has cancelled," he said.

In the week between the Docklands outrage and the Aldwych bus bomb the BTA office handled a record number of 8,500 calls for information, of which only six made

reference to security. So far, February is proving a record month with 29,688 Americans ringing the BTA office for information during the first two weeks of the month, compared with 50,307 during the whole of February 1995.

Neither British Airways nor American Airlines has had more than "a handful" of cancellations as a result of the bombings. Richard Tobias of the British Incoming Tour Operators Association said that, despite some reports to the contrary, there was "no evidence" of a downturn in either arrivals or bookings.

"I have checked and rechecked all our members and as a result I am much more comfortable than I originally feared. We have 24 million people from all over the world who will visit Britain in 1996 and I doubt if more than 500 have cancelled."

Adele Bliss, chairman of the BTA, said that she was "saddened and depressed" by the bombings but could find no evidence of mass cancellations. "I am afraid there has been a knee-jerk reaction in some places where people have assumed that tourists will cancel and will not accept the evidence to the contrary," she said.

"But we are continuing to tell the world the many good reasons there are to come to Britain, and I have no reason to doubt that 1996 will be another record year."



The walled town and harbour of Dubrovnik, now largely restored after the shelling and ready for tourists again

Welcome to Croatia

By ALAN HAMILTON

WITH THE fragile Balkan peace apparently holding after last weekend's "knocking together of heads in Rome, tour operators are taking the first tentative steps to rebuild the region's holiday industry, virtually destroyed by more than four years of war."

This summer, for the first time since 1991, a charter operator is offering packages from Britain to Dubrovnik, the magnificent walled town known as the pearl of the Adriatic, on the Dalmatian coast at the southern end of what is now the independent republic of Croatia.

Phoenix Holidays, British-based but Croatian-owned, is offering weekly direct flights from Gatwick and Manchester beginning in May, with seven-night packages from £215. The leading British tour operators had sent their 1996 brochures to the printers before peace broke out in the Balkans, but are considering a return to Dubrovnik for 1997. Swan Hellenic, the cruise

specialist, lists the destination as a port of call in this year's brochure.

In 1990, the last full season before Croatia and Slovenia precipitated hostilities by declaring independence from the then Yugoslavia, Dubrovnik had 853,000 visitors, with the British traditionally outnumbering even Germans and other near neighbours.

During 1991 and 1992, the ravishingly beautiful old town took a fearful pounding from Serb artillery. More than 2,000 shells fired from land and sea hit 563 buildings. The stout medieval walls took 147 direct hits, but survived largely unscathed.

Since then, a huge restoration effort largely funded by Unesco, which lists Dubrovnik as a world heritage site, has returned the town close enough to its former glory for the casual visitor barely to notice the damage. Nearly 250,000 clay tiles were imported

from France to replace the roofs, shrapnel holes in the polished limestone pavements have been invisibly mended, and only nine buildings remain gutted.

Several hotels were damaged, and some were subsequently used to house the homeless from the surrounding countryside after villages were bombed and burnt. But Vladimir Bakic, Dubrovnik's director of tourism, said this week that he expected to have 16,000 beds in the immediate area available for the coming season.

"The British were always among our best customers, and provided us with year-round business," Mr Bakic said. "Recently, too many articles in the British press have referred to Dubrovnik as being 'in war-torn Bosnia'. We are in Croatia; the British never holidayed in Bosnia."

There is no denying that as Dubrovnik lies at the south-

ernmost tip of a skinny coastal arm of Croatia, Bosnia is not much more than ten miles away, and you could comfortably drive to the still-disputed town of Mostar in a morning.

Most residents, however, are convinced that Dubrovnik is now perfectly safe, as indeed is the Foreign Office travel advice unit. So too is Tony Uwins, who came with his wife Ruth to live in the town in 1989 after retiring from his career as a solicitor in Lytham St Anne's. The couple brought with them their beloved red 1954 MG open-topped sports car, and enjoyed a brief celebrity by driving defiantly around town at the height of the shelling, flying a large Croatian flag.

"Of course it's safe now. Our grandchildren are coming to stay with us in the summer, and I am perfectly happy about that," Mr Uwins said, proudly displaying the 90mm Serb shell case that he now keeps as a grim but well-polished souvenir in his hall.

Germany: James Seridley on the fairy-tale castle of King Ludwig, John Arden in Thuringia.

Turkey: Stephen Brook on Cappadocia/Dalyan.

Theme parks: Paul Hogart in Belgium and Holland/Disneyland Britain; Jill Crawshaw on self-catering.

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Kenya rations park visitors

KENYA is to attempt to ration the number of tourists visiting the most popular game parks by raising admission fees from the beginning of next month, Harvey Elliott writes.

The Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) said this week that the planned increases are designed to "limit visitation at certain popular parks with fragile eco-systems, encourage tourists to visit the less crowded parks and reduce the concentration of visitors on the six most popular parks."

Foreign visitors to Kenya's parks and reserves pay \$20 (about £13) per adult and \$2 per child. Although KWS manages all 35 parks and reserves, 89 per cent of visitors go to the six most popular.

Under the new pricing structure visitors to Aberdare, Amboseli and Lake Nakuru national parks will pay \$27 per adult — a 35 per cent increase — and \$10 per child.

Visitors to the Tsavo national parks will pay \$23 and \$8 respectively and entrance to Nairobi, Shimba Hills and Meru national parks will pay



Parks are to hike entry fees

\$20 per adult and \$5 per child. The categories, the KWS says, are based on "environmental considerations, business volumes and potential development opportunities".

Dr David Western, director of KWS, said this week: "The categorisation is intended to reduce crowding."

The organisation now covers 60 per cent of its costs through self-generated income, mainly park entry fees, and is planning to become more self-sufficient.

Fast ferry rivals

By STEVE KEENAN

SALLY Ferries is the latest company to enter the rapidly expanding market for fast ferries this summer.

As the Stena line paraded its new high-speed craft, the HSS, for the first time this week, Sally revealed it is in the final stages of chartering a new fast ferry for its Ramsgate-Ostend route.

The mono-hold craft will carry 700 passengers and 230 cars, and will cut travel times in half to two hours.

Sally also operates two jetfoils and five conventional ferries to Dunkirk and Ostend, and the new move will intensify fast-ferry competition from the Kent ports.

Bill Moses, the group chief executive, said the speed of the new service will appeal to customers used to the "sausage factory" ferries operating out of Dover. He also predicted that Sally could move back into profit this year after losing more than £2m in 1995.

Airlines are miles apart

By DAVID CRUICKSHANK

BRITISH Airways has emerged as one of the least generous airlines for frequent business travellers to earn free flights, according to a new survey.

It shows that on domestic UK routes, business travellers flying BA have to make up to six more trips than on rival airlines to earn a bonus flight. On longer flights, however, BA's business class customers often get a better deal.

Richard Lovell, managing director of Carlson Wagonlit Travel in Europe, who commissioned the survey, says the results show the complexity of airline loyalty schemes which can cause confusion for companies. The agency also warns that excessive loyalty to one particular scheme can distort travel policy.

The increasing use of fre-

quent flyer schemes by airlines is, however, threatened by the European Commission, which is worried about their impact on competition in the European market.

In the United States there is also a threat from the tax authorities to restrict the allowances companies can claim against air travel if they allow their employees to keep points earned on company business.

TRAVEL BARGAINS

BREAKS

TIME OFF Ltd (0171 235 8070) has a two-night break for art lovers hoping to experience the Vermeer Exhibition in Mauritshuis, The Hague. Travelling on Eurostar costs from £204 per person, or flights from Heathrow, Gatwick or Manchester at £210 per person. Price includes exhibition entry, 2-star hotel accommodation, breakfast and transfers. Available on any day of the week from March 1 - June 2.

and return flights from Gatwick. Departures April 30, May 7 and 28.

TROPICAL Places (01342 825123) has an offer on a 13-night holiday on the island of Comores, near Tanzania, in the Indian Ocean. Staying at the 3-star Le Galawa Beach Hotel costs £1,479 for the first person, the second paying only half, and includes return flights. From February 28 - March 23.

FOR ART lovers wishing to enjoy the Holders Season of Opera in Barbados, Thomson (0171 707 9000) is offering return flights from Gatwick or Manchester and two-weeks accommodation at the Southern Palms Hotel for £999. Festival tickets begin at £11 for Shakespeare or the opera.

HOTELS

HILTON National guests staying at its Leeds and Huddersfield hotels can visit the new Royal Armouries Museum in Leeds free as part of a two-night weekend break, at prices starting at £32 per person, per night, including a buffet breakfast. Details: 0345 581595 quoting HF.

Worcestershire has cut its weekend rate between now and the end of March to £48.50 per person, per night. Antony Worrall Thompson is also guest chef for a gourmet evening on March 16 at £42.50 per person. Details: 01386 420007.

TRAVELLERS who use Gatwick Airport before they fly off on holiday can get a free teddybear if they stay at the nearby Copthorne Gatwick or Easingham Park hotels. At £88 per person per night, the offer includes free parking for up to 15 days along with the teddybear. Details: 0800 414741.

VISA Business cardholders can achieve savings of up to 40 per cent off the normal rate at more than 7,500 hotels worldwide featured in its new corporate rate hotel directory. Details: 0171-231 5443.

A 6PM late check-out time on a Sunday evening is being offered by Queens Moat Houses for guests on weekend breaks at more than 80 of its hotels in the UK. Prices for the "longer weekend" deal start at £43 per person for two nights. Details: 0645 333666.

WOOD Norton Hall in

FLIGHTS

TRAVELBAG will provide two nights' complementary accommodation in Los Angeles to passengers booking return economy (from £615) or business class (from £2,014) flights to Sydney with Air New Zealand from April 16. Details: 01420 88724.

CATHAY Pacific is offering 1,000 Air Miles, sufficient for a couple of London-Paris tickets, to business-class passengers booking round-trip tickets to Hong Kong. Details 0171-747 7007.

FLY midweek to Antwerp and Cityflyer charges only £49 for an excursion fare from Gatwick. Details 0181-897 4000.

UNTIL March 31 Continental will provide two business-class tickets for the price of one on the Gatwick

to New York route. To qualify passengers must join the carrier's frequent flyer scheme. However, enrolment can be arranged at the time of booking. Details 01293 776464.

KLM has introduced a lower £78 excursion fare between Heathrow and Amsterdam. Details 0181-750 9000.

AIR UK now offers the time-saving benefits of telephone check-in to full fare passengers flying its main Anglo-Scottish routes. Details 0345 959506.

SECURE Parking has lowered the cost of leaving your car at Heathrow. The off-airport parking firm charges £4.95 per day, with two weeks or more at a flat £69.30. Details 0181-813 8130.

FERRIES

SOME electrical goods will be reduced in price by Hoverspeed during February and March on its Dover-Calais and Folkestone-Boulogne routes. For example, a Casio twin CD player with cassette and radio is selling for £64.95, half the recommended retail price. The company has £29 day-trip fares from Dover for a car and five passengers (£39 Saturdays), £19 from Folkestone. Foot passengers pay £7 from Dover, £5 from Folkestone; offers valid until March 31. Details: 01304 240241.

SWANSEA Cork Ferries has cut nearly 60 per cent off crossings for a car and five passengers, departing on Thursday or Friday and returning on or before the following Monday. The new fare of £135 compares with a

brochure price of £318 for travel between March 21 and July 15, excluding April 2-10 and May 21-29. Details: 01792 450116.

SAVINGS to Bilbao in northern Spain are available through Driveline Europe, using P&O European Ferries from Portsmouth. A 17-day excursion, including cabin, for five people and car costs from £199. Details: 01707 660011.

BRITANNY Ferries is offering three-day mini-cruises to Santander in Spain for £39 per person (including cabin berth), and quotes £99 for car and occupants for 16 days. Services are from Portsmouth until March 19, from Plymouth thereafter until March 31. Details: 0990 260360.

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Not guilty plea insufficient to begin trial

Regina v Horseferry Road Magistrates' Court, Ex parte K

Before Lord Justice Kennedy and Mr Justice Forbes
[Judgment February 14]

The entering of a not guilty plea in a magistrates court initiated the trial process, but was not sufficient of itself to begin a trial within the meaning of section 25(2) of the Magistrates' Courts Act 1980, so as to permit justices to redetermine mode of trial.

However, for the purpose of section 25(2) the trial process did not only begin with the giving of evidence. There were a number of possible circumstances where the court could begin a trial after the taking of a not guilty plea but before hearing evidence, for example where the court heard submissions on a preliminary ruling of law which had a direct and immediate bearing on the conduct and content of the process of determining the guilt or innocence of the accused.

The common law defence of insanity had not been removed from magistrates courts by legislation and was therefore available to a defendant in a summary trial where mens rea was in issue.

The Queen's Bench Divisional Court held in a reserved judgment, refusing K's application to quash a decision by Horseferry Road Magistrates Court to commit him to the crown court for trial under section 25 of the 1980 Act, having initially decided to try him summarily on criminal charges to which he pleaded not guilty.

Section 25 of the 1980 Act provides: "(2) Where the court has begun to try the information summarily, the court may, at any time before the conclusion of the evidence for the prosecution, discontinue the summary trial and proceed to inquire into the information as examining justices."

Mr Richard Gordon, QC, and Mr Paul Bowen for the applicant; Mrs Patricia May for the prosecution.

MR JUSTICE FORBES.

delivering the judgment of the court, said that the applicant was charged with affray and common assault. After considering a psychiatric report which recommended the making of a hospital order under section 37 of the Mental Health Act 1983, the justices accepted jurisdiction, the applicant consented to summary trial and pleaded not guilty, and the case was adjourned.

On the trial date, further psychiatric reports were before the stipendiary magistrates. They recommended the imposition of a restriction order under section 41 of the 1983 Act, on the basis that the applicant suffered from delusional beliefs. That appeared to raise an arguable defence of insanity.

After hearing preliminary submissions on the questions whether the applicant was fit to stand trial, whether the defence of insanity was still appropriate and whether the defence of insanity was available to the applicant on a summary trial, the magistrates indicated that he wished to re-open the mode of trial procedure and he committed the applicant for trial at the crown court.

Mr Gordon submitted that two issues arose, (i) whether the magistrates had jurisdiction to re-open mode of trial; and (ii) whether the applicant would have been entitled to rely on the defence of insanity at a summary trial of the charges.

Sections 19, 20 and 25(2) of the 1980 Act were relevant. *Ex parte K* (1995) 1 WLR 939 was concerned with the effect of section 24(1) and was of little assistance in the proper interpretation of sections 19, 20 and 25(2) of the 1980 Act.

Their Lordships shared the doubts expressed about that case in *R v Hammersmith Juvenile Court, Ex parte O* (1995) 96 Cr App R 843 and *R v Liverpool Juvenile Court, Ex parte CFS, Liverpool* (1995) 90 Cr App R 201, 208.

Having regard to the mandatory terms of section 30(1), (2) and (3) of the 1980 Act, once magistrates had determined mode of trial under section 19, the only jurisdiction to re-open mode of trial was pursuant to section 25(2).

Mr Gordon submitted that the magistrates had no jurisdiction to re-open mode of trial because he had not begun to try the information. He submitted that *R v Dudley Justices, Ex parte Gillard* (1986) AC 442 was binding authority for the proposition that the process of summary trial was not begun by either a plea of guilty or not guilty. Lord Justice Bingham described the effect of *Ex parte Gillard* in *R v St Helens Magistrates Court, Ex parte Critchley* (1987) 152 JP 102, 105. The court adopted that clear and succinct analysis of the effect of *Ex parte Gillard*.

Mr Gordon submitted that the words "try" and "trial" in section 25(2) of the 1980 Act were construed narrowly in *Ex parte Gillard* to mean the process of determining the guilt or innocence of the accused, which process did not include the initial plea; and that although the facts of the case were concerned only with a plea of guilty, Lord Bridge's speech, in particular at p452, made it clear that the reasoning applied equally to a not guilty plea.

Ex parte Gillard conclusively established that where there was a plea of guilty in the magistrates' court to an information alleging an offence triable either way, the court had not "begun to try the information" summarily for the purposes of section 25(2) of the 1980 Act.

But that, case, left open the question whether a not guilty plea could form part of the process of determining the guilt or innocence of the accused, in the narrow sense of the words "try" and "trial".

A plea of not guilty could be said to initiate the process of determining the guilt or innocence of the accused, which process did not include the initial plea; and that although the facts of the case were concerned only with a plea of guilty, Lord Bridge's speech, in particular at p452, made it clear that the reasoning applied equally to a not guilty plea.

If all that happened following a not guilty plea was that the court put the matter over to another day for trial, the process of determining guilt or innocence, although initiated, had still not begun.

The decision of the Divisional

Court in *Ex parte O* was of no real assistance and should be disregarded since the court's attention had not been drawn to the decision in *Ex parte Gillard*.

The factual circumstances of a particular case had to show something more than a plea of not guilty had occurred before it could be said that the trial had begun for the purposes of section 25(2). But the trial process did not begin only with the giving of evidence.

It was neither necessary nor desirable to enumerate all the possible circumstances where, after a plea of not guilty and before the commencement of the evidence, it could become apparent that the court had embarked upon the process of determining the guilt or innocence of the accused and had thus begun the trial.

But one such possible circumstance could arise where, as in the instant case, the defence made and the magistrates considered submissions on an application for a preliminary ruling of law which had a direct and immediate bearing on the conduct and content of the process of determining the guilt or innocence of the accused.

Thus, while to seek a preliminary ruling as to the appropriateness of a hospital order under section 37 of the 1983 Act was not a matter relevant to the process of determining the guilt or innocence of the applicant, a ruling as to the possible availability of a defence of insanity would have a direct and immediate bearing on the conduct and content of that process.

It was a perfectly proper exercise of the power under section 25(2) for justices to decide to re-open mode of trial as the result of having been apprised of a matter which, had it been known at the time, would have been an appropriate consideration under section 19(3) for the purposes of the original decision as to mode of trial.

The possible defence of insanity and the available powers of the court were matters which were significantly, although not exclusively, offence related and were embraced by the words "any other circumstances" in section 19(3).

In the present case the magistrates were fully justified in committing the applicant to the crown court for trial and the application for judicial review failed.

However, there was a general public interest to be served in expressing the court's conclusions on Mr Gordon's submission that the common law defence of insanity was available as a defence to all criminal charges where mens rea was in issue.

Before 1800 the defence of insanity was available to all criminal prosecutions, whether brought before magistrates or on indictment.

The Criminal Lunatics Act 1800, and the Insane Prisoners Act 1800, which dealt with special verdict procedures in trials on indictment, did not prevent a defendant from relying on a defence of insanity where appropriate in a summary trial.

Section 20 of the Trial of Lunatics Act 1883, prior to amendment, was only concerned with criminal trials on indictment and by way of information in the High Court and left unaffected the position with regard to summary trials in magistrates' courts.

Neither the Criminal Procedure (Insanity) Act 1964, nor the Criminal Procedure (Insanity and Unfitness to Plead) Act 1991 affected the definition of insanity at common law, nor did they restrict the common law defence of insanity as a defence.

The lack of power of justices to commit a person to the crown court for consideration of the imposition of a restriction order did not state in terms that all notices to local authorities had to be in writing. The highest it could be put was that the modes of service it permitted were obviously only available for written notices.

Section 34(2) of the 1969 Act, as amended by section 108(4) of the Children Act 1989 and section 168(1) of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994, provided: "In the case of a person who has attained the age of eighteen but has attained such lower age as the secretary of state may by order specify, no proceedings... for an offence shall be begun in any court unless the requirements of this subsection are met. In this subsection the words 'proceedings' mean proceedings for an offence falling to be given by him to a local authority in pursuance of section... 58 of this Act, given notice to a probation officer for the area for which the court acts."

Section 58 of the 1969 Act provides: "It shall be the duty of a person who decides to lay an information in respect of an offence in a case where... the offender is a young person to give notice of the proceedings to the appropriate local authority..."

On July 20, Mr Cotter was charged with one breach of the Public Order Act 1986 and two breaches of the Criminal Damage Act 1971. He was bailed to appear before the Watford Youth Court on August 25, 1995.

On August 22 the Watford

Proceedings not void by failure to give notice

Director of Public Prosecutions v Cotter

Before Lord Justice Seville and Mr Justice Blofield
[Judgment February 8]

Proceedings against a young person were begun in court for the purposes of section 34(2) of the Children and Young Persons Act 1969 when the defendant was first brought before the court.

It was not necessary the case that notice had to be given under section 58 of that Act to the local authority before proceedings were begun, but the notice had to be given as soon as reasonably practicable after the decision to bring proceedings was made. That might and usually would be before court proceedings were begun.

Notices did not have to be given in writing and a failure to comply with the requirements of, either, section 58 did not render the proceedings null and void.

The Queen's Bench Divisional Court so stated when allowing an appeal by the Director of Public Prosecutions by way of case stated against the decision of Watford Justices on October 6, 1995 to adjourn proceedings against David Cotter as null and void since by virtue of section 34(2) of the Children and Young Persons Act 1969 there had been a failure to comply with section 58 of that Act. The case was remitted to the justices.

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On August 22 the Watford

House cannot be forfeited

Regina v Pearce

Before Lord Justice Staller-Smith, Mr Justice Buckley and Judge Hyatt
[Judgment February 19]

Although real property was bought solely for the cultivation of controlled drugs, section 27 of the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 did not empower a court to order forfeiture of that real property.

The Court of Appeal so stated when allowing the appeal of John Pearce, Peter Pearce and an unnamed person against an order made under section 27 of the 1971 Act by Judge Rogers, QC, at Maidstone Crown Court on September 28, 1995 of the forfeiture of premises on which the appellants had cultivated controlled drugs.

On April 10, 1995 before Judge Baskin the appellants had pleaded guilty to producing cannabis. He did not appeal against a sentence of three years imprisonment.

Section 27 of the 1971 Act provides: "If the court is of the opinion that a person is convicted of an offence under this Act in connection with the cultivation of controlled drugs, the court may order anything shown to the satisfaction of the court to relate to the offence, to be forfeited and either destroyed or dealt with in such other manner as the court may order."

Mr Andrew Rutter, assigned by the Registrar of Criminal Appeals, for the appellants Mr John Baskin for the Crown.

LORD JUSTICE STALLER-SMITH said that Judge Rogers took the view that the word "anything" in the section included the house in question which, he held, had been bought solely for the purpose of cultivating the drugs.

The appellants submitted that the word "anything" did not include

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Chaloner (Inspector of Taxes) v Pellipar Investments Ltd

Before Mr Justice Rafter
[Judgment February 16]

The provisions of section 20 of the Capital Gains Tax Act 1979, now re-enacted in section 22 of the Taxation of Chargeable Gains Act 1992, on disposal where capital sums derived from assets, did not apply to the receipt by a landowner of "money's worth" in exchange for the grant of leases of land.

Section 20(1)(a) applied to capital sums received as consideration for use or exploitation of assets but was not apt to include capital sums received as consideration for the grant of the owner's title to the land.

Mr Justice Rafter so held in a reserved judgment in the Queen's

Bench Division when allowing the Crown's appeal from a determination of Mr T. H. K. Everett, a special commissioner, in favour of Pellipar Investments Ltd in relation to estimated assessments to capital gains tax for accounting periods to June 1988 and June 1992 respectively.

Section 20 of the 1979 Act provides: "(1) ... there is for the purposes of this Act a disposal of assets by their owner where any capital sum is derived from assets notwithstanding that no asset is acquired by the person paying the capital sum, and this subsection applies in particular to— (a) capital sums received as consideration for use or exploitation of assets."

"(2) In the case of a disposal within paragraph... (b) of subsection (1) above the time of the disposal shall be the time when the capital sum is received as described in the subsection."

"(3) 'Capital sum' means any money or money's worth..."

Mr Timothy Brennan for the Crown; Mr Richard Bramwell, QC, for the company.

MR JUSTICE RAFTER said that in 1987 the company entered into an agreement with developers for the redevelopment of three sites, A, B and C, that the company owned in the City of London. The agreement provided that the development of site A was to be consideration for the grant by the company of leases of sites B and C to the developers. Site A was completed in July 1991.

The 1991 date for which the company contended gave it the benefit of the "re-basing" pro-

visions in section 96 of the Finance Act 1982 for computation purposes.

The commissioner accepted the company's case that since the capital sum was consideration for the grant of leases of sites B and C, the capital sum received as consideration for the use or exploitation of assets.

The answer affected the timing of the disposal for tax purposes. If section 20(1)(a) applied then the disposal took place when the benefit of the development was received by the company, namely July 1991. If it did not apply the disposal date was the date of the agreement, August 1987.

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THE SUNDAY TIMES

I AM HEATHCLIFF...

As Cliff Richard limbers up for his musical of Wuthering Heights, Lesley White, in the Magazine, finds out if the Bachelor Boy is too nice to play the Brontë brute

DO WOMEN WEAR JOCKSTRAPS?

They play just as rough as the men on the pitch—and off. From locker room to bar room, the Magazine sees the England women's rugby team in action

THE SUNDAY TIMES IS THE SUNDAY PAPERS

European Law Report

Pay rise for those on maternity leave

Gillespie and Others v Northern Health and Social Services Board and Others
Case C-342/93

Before G. C. Rodríguez Iglesias, President and Judges D. A. O. Edwards, J. P. Pouscoster, G. Harisch, C. F. Mancoske, J. Schöckweiler, J. C. Molitor de Almeida, P. J. G. Kapteyn, C. Gulmann, J. L. Murray and P. Jona
Advocate General F. Léger
[Opinion June 6, 1995]
[Judgment February 13]

The principle of equal pay in Community law did not require that women should continue to receive full pay during maternity leave and did not lay down specific criteria for determining the amount of benefit payable during that period, provided that the amount of benefit was not so low as to undermine the purpose of maternity leave.

To the extent that it was calculated on the basis of pay received before the beginning of maternity leave, the amount of benefit had to take account of pay rises awarded during the maternity leave.

The Court of Justice of the European Communities so held on a reference, by order dated June 25, 1993, by the Court of Appeal in Northern Ireland for a preliminary ruling under article 177 of the EEC Treaty, on questions on the interpretation of article 119 of the Treaty and Council Directive 75/117/EEC (February 10, 1975) on the approximation of the laws of the member states relating to the application of the principle of equal pay for men and women (OJ 1975 L45 p19).

Joan Gillespie and 16 other plaintiffs, employees of various Northern Ireland health services, took maternity leave during 1988. Under a collective agreement, they received during that period full weekly pay for the first four weeks, nine-tenths of full weekly pay for two weeks thereafter, and one-half of full weekly pay for 12 weeks. The amount of benefit was

determined, pursuant to Northern Ireland regulations, on the basis of average weekly pay in the two months preceding the fifteenth week before the beginning of the expected week of confinement; the reference pay. No provision was made for an increase in reference pay in the event of a subsequent pay rise.

In November 1989, individual pay increases in the health services were awarded, but the plaintiffs were unable to receive that increase because of the method of calculating maternity benefit laid down in the collective agreement.

In proceedings brought by them, the plaintiffs claimed to have suffered discrimination on the ground of sex, because (a) their pay had been reduced during maternity leave and (b) they had not received the benefit of the backdated pay rise.

Article 119 of the EEC Treaty provides: "Each member state shall... ensure and... maintain the application of the principle that men and women should receive equal pay for equal work."

"For the purpose of this article, 'pay' means the ordinary basic or minimum wage or salary and any other consideration... which the worker receives, directly or indirectly, in respect of his employment from his employer."

Article 1 of Directive 75/117 provides: "The principle of equal pay for men and women outlined in article 119 of the Treaty means, for the same work or for work to which equal value is attributed, the elimination of all discrimination on grounds of sex with regard to all aspects and conditions of remuneration."

In its judgment the European Court of Justice held: 1. Followed from case law that since the benefit paid by an employer under legislative or collective agreements to a woman on maternity leave was based on the employment relationship, it constituted pay within the meaning of article 119 of the Treaty and Directive 75/117. Article 119 of the

Treaty and article 1 of the directive therefore precluded regulations which permitted men and women to be paid at different rates for the same work or for work of equal value.

It was well settled that discrimination involved the application of different rules to comparable situations or the application of the same rule to different situations.

Women taking maternity leave provided for by national legislation were in a special position which required them to be afforded special protection, but which was not comparable either with that of men or with that of a woman actually at work.

Council Directive 92/85/EEC of October 19, 1992 (OJ 1992 L348 p1) provided for various measures to protect, inter alia, the safety and health of female workers, especially before and after giving birth.

Since, in view of its date, that directive did not apply to the present case, it was for the national legislature to set the amount of the benefit to be paid during maternity leave, having regard to the duration of such leave and the existence of any other social advantages.

At the material time neither article 119 of the Treaty nor article 1 of Directive 75/117 required that women should continue to receive full pay during maternity leave. Nor did those provisions lay down any specific criteria for determining the amount of benefit to be paid to them during that period.

The amount payable could not, however, be so low as to undermine the purpose of maternity leave, namely, the protection of women before and after giving birth. In order to assess the adequacy of the amount payable from that point of view, the length of time that women on maternity leave were based on the employment relationship, it constituted pay within the meaning of article 119 of the Treaty and Directive 75/117. Article 119 of the

that in the present case the amount of the benefit granted was such as to undermine the objective of protecting maternity leave.

A woman on maternity leave should receive a pay rise awarded before or during that period, for the following reasons.

The benefit paid during maternity leave was equivalent to a weekly payment calculated on the basis of the average pay received by the worker at the time when it was actually working and which was paid to her week by week, just like any other worker.

The principle of non-discrimination therefore required that a woman who was still linked to her employer by a contract of employment or an employment relationship during maternity leave must, like any other worker, benefit from any pay rise, even if backdated, which was awarded between the beginning of the period covered by reference pay and the end of maternity leave.

To deny such an increase to a woman on maternity leave would discriminate against her purely in her capacity as a worker since, had she not been pregnant, she would have received the pay rise.

On those grounds, the Court of Justice ruled:

The principle of equal pay laid down in article 119 of the EEC Treaty and set out in detail in Council Directive 75/117/EEC neither required that women should continue to receive full pay during maternity leave, nor laid down specific criteria for determining the amount of benefit payable to them during that period, provided that the amount was not so low as to jeopardize the purpose of maternity leave.

However, to the extent that it was calculated on the basis of pay received by a woman before the commencement of maternity leave, the amount of benefit must take account of pay rises awarded between the beginning of the period covered by reference pay and the end of maternity leave, as from the date on which they took effect.

City Road

Former manager to lead revival Watford put faith in Taylor to bring back good old days

By DAVID MADDOCK

THERE is a wise old saying in football that suggests you should never go back. Graham Taylor, the former England manager, has chosen to ignore such advice by accepting the overtures of Watford, the club with whom he first came to national prominence.

A press conference is scheduled for this morning at Vicarage Road, to welcome back Taylor, the only man whom the Watford board interviewed, as the general manager and replacement for Glenn Roeder, the manager who parted company with the club on Tuesday night.

Taylor, 51, took Watford to second place in the old Football League first division, and to an FA Cup Final appearance in 1984 before moving on to manage Aston Villa and then England. He resigned as manager of Wolverhampton Wanderers in November and returns to Watford today with things looking slightly less healthy — Watford are anchored at the foot of the first

division, six points adrift of their nearest rivals. The team is at home to Ipswich Town in the League on Saturday.

Negotiations continued late into the afternoon yesterday before the appointment was finally confirmed. Given the hostile nature of the recent publicity he has generated, Taylor has chosen to take a step backwards from the full glare of media attention.

His title of general manager, with a first-team coach taking some of the responsibility for team affairs, is intended to allay some of what Taylor believes has been unfair treatment at the hands of the media.

A brief statement issued by the club last night read: "Graham Taylor will have overall responsibility for running all aspects of the club on a day-to-day basis."

His choice as coach is Luther Blissett, who was his centre forward during Watford's most successful period in the mid-1980s. Blissett is

already employed by the club in a commercial capacity, and has applied no less than 11 times for a position in coaching. Needless to say, then, that he is highly delighted to be presented with such an opportunity at last.

Taylor, who played for Grimsby Town and then cut his management teeth at Lincoln City, is also taking his former No 2 at Wolverhampton Wanderers back to Watford, yet another Vicarage Road old boy Bobby Downs. Kenny Jackett, also a player from the Eighties, will complete the management team as youth team coach.

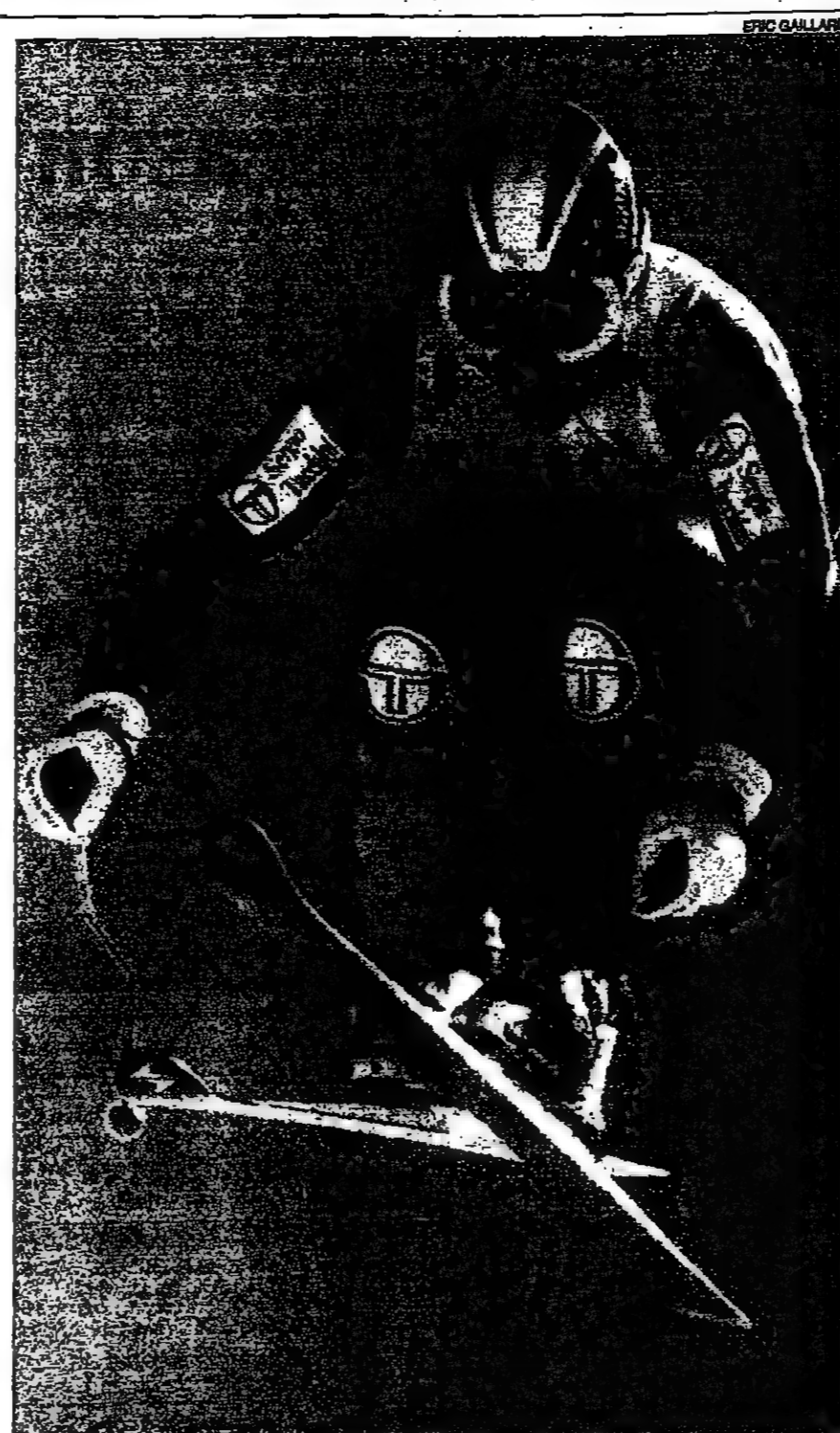
One intriguing result of Taylor's return could be a resurrection of the partnership that he formed at the club with Elton John, the pop singer who was chairman of the club for much of the 1980s. Under John, Watford enjoyed a wonderful period of success, and Taylor is hopeful of persuading his former chairman to play a more active role in the club once again, by providing much-needed finance, and perhaps even a return to the board. John is the life president of the Hertfordshire club.

Tom Lees completed his £2 million transfer to Coventry City yesterday, after further talks with Ron Atkinson, the club's manager. The Midlands club was rather reluctant to unveil its new signing after talks that proved rather more difficult than anticipated. It was left to Roy Aitken, Lees's manager at Aberdeen, to confirm that the deal had been completed.

Jess, a midfield player, will go straight into the squad for the match against Middlesbrough at the weekend.

Manchester City also moved into the transfer market when they secured Scott Hiley, the Birmingham City full back, on a three-month loan. Alan Ball, the manager at Moline Road, said: "I know Scott from my days at Exeter when he was a player under me, and knowing him as I do, I will be surprised if it doesn't lead to a permanent transfer at the end of the season." Ball is also considering a move for John Harrison, the Arsenal forward.

Sheffield United took action yesterday to prevent the looming possibility of relegation from the Endsligh Insurance League first division by splashing out £500,000 on Andy Walker, the Scotland and Celtic centre forward. Neil Lennon, a Northern Ireland international playing for Crewe Alexandra of the second division, confirmed last night that he has turned down an approach from Coventry in favour of a move to Leicester City.



Girardelli takes flight on his way to a combined gold medal at Sierra Nevada

Girardelli back to best

By OUR SPORTS STAFF

AFTER 17 years on the World Cup circuit, Marc Girardelli proved that he remains one of the greatest skiers of the modern era when he won the Alpine slalom combined world championship for the third time in Sierra Nevada, Spain yesterday.

Girardelli, 32, from Luxembourg, was 2.45sec behind the leader, Mario Reiter, after the slalom on Tuesday, but secured the gold medal with the fourth-fastest time in the downhill of 1min 52.96sec, to post a combined time of 3min 31.95sec.

The Austrian-born skier won the combined in 1987 and 1989 and now has a haul of 11 world championship medals — four gold, four silver and three bronze — and two Olympic silver medals.

Lasse Kjus, of Norway, the defending and Olympic champion, took the silver medal 0.25sec behind Girardelli and Guntner Mader, from Austria, was third in 3min 32.93sec. Reiter,

the slalom specialist from Austria, who finished just out of the medals in fourth, said of Girardelli: "The gold should be his. He is still the best."

Despite his triumph, Girardelli was critical of the downhill course, saying it was not steep and demanding enough for top-level racing. "It's a great feeling to win a race because my season has not been too good," he said, "but the race was a bit of a lottery. This downhill course should have been a cross-country course."

Girardelli needed to use all of his experience to stay in the competition in the slalom when he almost missed a gate in the second run, held under floodlights in the evening in near-blizzard conditions. But he corrected his mistake with the precision and lightning-fast reactions of an accomplished acrobat. "I had a lot of problems with the slalom when I almost crashed out," Girardelli, who won a com-

bined at Veysonnaz, in Switzerland, earlier in the season, said. "I did not expect the gold. I thought the gap to Reiter was too big. But this result has saved my season."

"It is too early to say that I am back, but I am better than I was before," he said referring to his poor recent form. Kjus was ninth after the slalom — the first race to be held under floodlights at a world championships — but he produced the fastest run of 1min 51.82sec in the downhill to move on to the podium. "I am a bit disappointed," he said, "but it was a slow gliders course."

Today, it is the turn of the women to take on the giant slalom course at Sierra Nevada. Martina Ertl, of Germany, has had a week to recover from a training fall and starts as one of the favourites, along with her team-mate, Katja Seizinger, and Anita Wachter, of Austria.

Pinkney to fly home as England injuries multiply

By OUR SPORTS STAFF

NICK PINKNEY, the Keighley centre, became the latest England player to pull out of the inaugural rugby league Super League World Nines tournament in Fiji yesterday. Pinkney, 25, has been ruled out of the 16-team tournament, which kicks off in the early hours of this morning, with a stomach virus. He will return home as soon as possible.

England, who lost captain Denis Betts on Tuesday with an ankle injury, do not have time to send for a replacement for Pinkney and will carry on with a 14-man squad. Andy Farrell, of Wigan, has taken over the captaincy and the World Cup finalists should still qualify in the top two from pool B, which also includes Tonga, Canada and Morocco.

Farrell said: "Obviously it is a blow to lose Nick, but we are confident of turning in good performances in the nines championship. The greatest difficulty we will face is the climate."

"We have come from snowstorms in England to temperatures topping 100 degrees. On top of that, the humidity is around 90 per cent and could prove crucial."

If things go as expected, England and Australia, the World Cup winners, are set to meet in the semi-finals on Saturday morning.

Wales, captained by the hooker, Martin Hall, are in pool D along with Papua New Guinea, Fiji and the Cook Islands, while Ireland face New Zealand, France and Japan in their group. Scotland, who have eight professionals in their squad, appear to face the toughest task to qualify from their section. Their rivals include Australia and Western Samoa. The United States complete the group.

Halifax, who face Leeds in the quarter-final of the Silk Cut Challenge Cup on Sunday, have three players facing disciplinary hearings this evening. A suspension for any of them would mean missing the game at Thrum Hall.

The full back, Mike Umaga, and the winger, John Bendley, were already due to appear before the Rugby Football League's disciplinary committee in Leeds for allegedly striking an opponent and an alleged high tackle respectively. Now they are joined by team-mate Michael Jackson, the second row forward, who has been cited by Sheffield Eagles for alleged use of the forearm last Sunday.

Oldham Bears yesterday put nine players — five of them senior professionals — on the transfer list as they prepared for the start of Super League. Ian Sherratt, a prop, Wally Gibson, the full back, Sean Irwin, a centre, and utility forwards, Craig Richards and Ian Green have all been made available for sale, along with Alfie Gouldbourne, Aidie Maudie, Michael Prescott and Martin Halkyard.

Early loss fails to halt charge by England

ENGLAND'S women began their Uber Cup badminton campaign with a 4-1 win over Bulgaria in Prague yesterday, despite the loss of the opening match by Joanne Muggeridge, the England No 1. The men beat Poland 5-0 in their match of the Thomas Cup.

It was, however, England's only loss which could prove to be their most significant result. Muggeridge went down 12-11, 2-11, 11-1 to Nely Nedeljkova, 21. Muggeridge displayed her anxiety about qualifying for the Olympics with ten weeks to go to the cut-off date, in yesterday's error-prone effort. The loss to the world No 87 may affect her world-ranking and consequent place in Atlanta.

Last night, the women had secured a winning 3-0 lead in their second match of these world team championships, against France.

McMillan deal

Boxing: Colin McMillan has signed a "flexible" contract with Pance Eliazar and Frank Maloney, promoter and manager respectively of Lennox Lewis, that could win him a world title attempt within three years.

A British featherweight title challenge against Jorge Irujo, of Doncaster, is planned initially — McMillan is mandatory challenger — with a World Boxing Council challenge against Luisito Espinosa, of the Philippines, later. The deal allows McMillan to box for other promoters too.

Hastings hope

American football: Gavin Hastings, former Scotland rugby union captain, who holds a record 36 caps, is expected to be named as kicker for the Scottish Claymores today. "The fact that the announcement is at Murrayfield home of the Scotland national union game certainly says something," Wil Wilson, a spokesman said.

Hot Hakkinen

Motor racing: Mika Hakkinen, of Finland, broke the lap record in the season-opening 1000km race yesterday, three months after fracturing his skull in the Australian Grand Prix. Hakkinen clocked 1min 20.87sec in his McLaren.

Oxford sweep

Rugby: Oxford made a clean sweep against Cambridge in the university match at Queen's Club when they clinched both doubles matches, having already taken a 4-0 lead after the singles.

Defoy steps down

Golf: Craig Defoy has stepped down after ten years as Welsh national golf coach. David Lewellyn, a leading figure in the Welsh World Cup team, is a front runner for the position.

King has bowls crown in sight

By GORDON ALLAN

MERVYN KING reached the semi-finals of the Churchill Insurance world indoor bowls singles championship for the second year running when he beat Jeremy Henry 7-5, 7-5, 7-4 in the Preston Guild Hall yesterday.

On his previous appearances at this event, King had lost three times to Richard Corsie. This year, Corsie is already out of the tournament, beaten by Henry, and that will serve to encourage King.

"I've never played better

here than I did today," King said. "I had a hard game against Stephen Rees in the last round and another against Jeremy today, and that's what you need at this level. Easy wins don't help."

Asked if he thought he could go on to win the title, he replied: "Deep down, yes. But it's all on the day. It always is."

Henry said: "I played better against Mervyn than I did against Richard, but Mervyn was brilliant and if he goes on

like that, I can't see anyone stopping him."

The first set in a match of high quality went to 12 ends, lasting just over an hour, and all scores were ones. King was whitewashed, surprisingly, in the second set, and saved a set lie before winning the third.

He put hardly a bowl wrong in the final set, drawing, running or replacing with equal facility. He opened with a four, all close, even though Henry's first bowl went down excellently, and he picked up three more hard-earned ones to win.

David Gourlay Jr, who plays Greg Harlow in a singles quarter-final today, has an impressive pedigree in bowls. He has won two indoor titles, a Scottish record, including two with his brother, Ian, and his parents, David and Sarah, both international players, have won world championships and Commonwealth Games gold medals.

He is pleased with his form at Preston, as well he might be, having beaten two past champions, Tony Alcock and John Price. Gary Smith and Andy Thomson were generous in their praise of Gourlay's leading in their pairs match, and he said somebody would have to play exceptionally well to beat him in the singles. Praise from Caesar.

The quarter-finals will be completed today by Hugh Duff's meeting with Ian Bond. Duff was the 1986 world champion, but Bond was little known outside Devon before he won the English singles last April.

FOR THE RECORD	
BADMINTON	PRAGUE: Thomas Cup, Preliminary round: Group 1: China 3-0, Korea 0-3; Group 2: Korea 3-0, China 0-3; Group 3: Korea 3-0, China 0-3; Group 4: Korea 3-0, China 0-3; Group 5: Korea 3-0, China 0-3; Group 6: Korea 3-0, China 0-3; Group 7: Korea 3-0, China 0-3; Group 8: Korea 3-0, China 0-3; Group 9: Korea 3-0, China 0-3; Group 10: Korea 3-0, China 0-3; Group 11: Korea 3-0, China 0-3; Group 12: Korea 3-0, China 0-3; Group 13: Korea 3-0, China 0-3; Group 14: Korea 3-0, China 0-3; Group 15: Korea 3-0, China 0-3; Group 16: Korea 3-0, China 0-3; Group 17: Korea 3-0, China 0-3; Group 18: Korea 3-0, China 0-3; Group 19: Korea 3-0, China 0-3; Group 20: Korea 3-0, China 0-3; Group 21: Korea 3-0, China 0-3; Group 22: Korea 3-0, China 0-3; Group 23: Korea 3-0, China 0-3; Group 24: Korea 3-0, China 0-3; Group 25: Korea 3-0, China 0-3; Group 26: Korea 3-0, China 0-3; Group 27: Korea 3-0, China 0-3; Group 28: Korea 3-0, China 0-3; Group 29: Korea 3-0, China 0-3; Group 30: Korea 3-0, China 0-3; Group 31: Korea 3-0, China 0-3; Group 32: Korea 3-0, China 0-3; Group 33: Korea 3-0, China 0-3; Group 34: Korea 3-0, China 0-3; Group 35: Korea 3-0, China 0-3; Group 36: Korea 3-0, China 0-3; Group 37: Korea 3-0, China 0-3; Group 38: Korea 3-0, China 0-3; Group 39: Korea 3-0, China 0-3; Group 40: Korea 3-0, China 0-3; Group 41: Korea 3-0, China 0-3; Group 42: Korea 3-0, China 0-3; Group 43: Korea 3-0, China 0-3; Group 44: Korea 3-0, China 0-3; Group 45: Korea 3-0, China 0-3; Group 46: Korea 3-0, China 0-3; Group 47: Korea 3-0, China 0-3; Group 48: Korea 3-0, China 0-3; Group 49: Korea 3-0, China 0-3; Group 50: Korea 3-0, China 0-3; Group 51: Korea 3-0, China 0-3; Group 52: Korea 3-0, China 0-3; Group 53: Korea 3-0, China 0-3; Group 54: Korea 3-0, China 0-3; Group 55: Korea 3-0, China 0-3; Group 56: Korea 3-0, China 0-3; Group 57: Korea 3-0, China 0-3; Group 58: Korea 3-0, China 0-3; Group 59: Korea 3-0, China 0-3; Group 60: Korea 3-0, China 0-3; Group 61: Korea 3-0, China 0-3; Group 62: Korea 3-0, China 0-3; 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Watch out, there's a serial borrower about

Tracing the origins of *Silent Witness* (BBC1) was not exactly difficult. From the opening scenes last night it was clear we were dealing with the work of a serial borrower.

The trial began in the lecture theatre, with Dr Sam Ryan (Amanda Burton) holding forth on her specialist subject — dead bodies. Horrifying pictures of murder scenes flashed through the projector, the images contrasting deliberately with the well rehearsed wisdom she had to impart. "Take your time, the body's going to be there," she said. "You must have had that one of a *Cracker*."

The lecture over, she walked out into... a college quad, all golden stone and well clipped grass. Just like Inspector Morse. It turned out to be Cambridge, but it didn't matter. Just think of all those lovely garden parties and organ recitals she'll be able to go to between post mortems.

Three or four rather shocking scenes later (the *Cracker* influence again — hit 'em early and hit 'em hard) the story proper got underway. A little girl had been found dead in a stream. The question was, as it always is, did she fall or was she pushed? Leading the investigation was DI Adams (John McGlynn) helped by the arresting lady attractive and strangely underdressed DC Cox (Ruth Gemmell). A four detective with a glamorous sidekick — where have we seen that before? Cornwall? Weymouth?

All the above I could forgive, especially as *Silent Witness* turned out to be well written, well acted and well directed. Harry Hook, the director of this two-part story, in particular struck a very effective compromise between style and pace. It looked good and got on with the plot, a rare beast indeed.

But once again, nagging doubts remained. If it were Ryan, a pathologist prone to dreams, I'd be having

nightmares about it. The "it" being *Dangerfield*, that everyday tale of a Warwickshire police surgeon. How can the same BBC drama department commission both series within months of each other — is it lack of imagination or simple commercial exploitation?

Both series feature actors who became serious stars by playing doctors who heal the sick — Nigel Le Vaillant, who went from *Casualty* to *Dangerfield* and Burton, who prior to last night was best known for *Peak Practice*. In their new incarnations both are still doctors, but they now deal in dead bodies, a career move which allows the plots to be rather more exciting.

The similarities do not stop there. Both are single, attractive in the same way, "I'm too busy but sort of weary, I live in pretty surroundings. In fact they look made for each other — one



Matthew Bond

introduction and they could be sharing coffee mugs and cable-knit jumpers for decades. Alas, *Mendips* Mortuary, television's first cadaver saga, will have to wait. *Dangerfield* and Ryan are clearly not destined to meet.

"Why didn't the police surgeon certify death?" asked Ryan tetchily, as she strode across a field in one of those unbecomingly white boiler suits. "He wasn't happy." That

sounds like *Dangerfield* — probably worrying about which beautiful, unattached woman not to jump on next. "Anyone else touching the body?" she barked a moment later. "Just the police surgeon..."

When not just missing *Dangerfield*, Burton provided an encouraging start to her new screen persona as Ryan — detached and clinically methodical while working, but prone to the occasional emotional outburst to keep us interested and give the trailer department something to work with. The one problem, I suspect, is that this being a "star vehicle" Ryan will end up solving many of the cases herself, which could place the show's carefully assembled credibility under strain.

No doubt the same BBC executives who are now regretting the decision to give Ryan not just an Ulster back-

ground, but one rooted in the violence of the troubles. What was presumably planned as historical resonance is once again distressingly contemporary.

On BBC2, unfortunately at exactly the same time, *Under the Sun* was supplying highly watchable evidence that fact is much, much stranger than fiction — especially in America. Each winter, the population of Quartzsite, Arizona, swells from 2,000 to almost one million. What happens to its average age is difficult to calculate.

As Russell England's invigorating and beautifully observed film showed, each winter Quartzsite is invaded by hundreds of thousands of "snowbirds" — elderly people driven south in search of sun. They come in what Americans call RVs (recreational vehicles) and we would call motorised caravans, and park on the desert, creating a

sort of chaotic cross between a huge car boot sale and a drive-in old people's home.

But these were not old folk as normally portrayed. The flesh may be weak (four out of five are said to have serious health problems) but the spirit was definitely willing. They were generally drinking, dancing and gambling their way into that good night — and most encouraging it was.

A few came for the peace of the desert ("I'll turn my hearing aid up I can't come to escape their children" (the film was titled *Spending the Kids' Inheritance*) and have as much fun as possible. The men who danced well were the ones to watch apparently. "They can have any woman they like," said one merry and admiring widow. Have, as in...? Well, no one was telling. But as a vigorous octogenarian put it: "If the rig's a-rocking, don't come knocking."

- BBC1**
- 6.00am Business Breakfast (12464)
7.00am BBC Breakfast News (30025)
9.00am Breakfast News Extra (476291)
9.25am Can't Cook, Won't Cook (s) (3833754)
9.45am Killy (5895498)
10.30am Good Morning (s) (30281)
12.00pm News (s) (30281) Regional news and weather (8620735) 12.05pm News (s) (9171308)
12.30pm Going for a Song (s) (48185)
1.00pm One O'Clock News (s) (30281) and weather (37984)
1.30pm Regional News and weather (77151700)
1.40pm Neighbourhood (s) (30281) 2.00pm Posh (s) (30281) 2.40pm The Flying Doctors (s) (30281)
3.30pm The New York Bear Show (s) (30281) 3.35pm The Muppet Show (s) (30281) 3.45pm Dinobirds (s) (7571445) 4.10pm Highlander (s) (30281) 4.35pm The Family Web Show (s) (30281) 4.55pm Newsnight (s) (30281) 5.10pm Grange Hill (s) (30281)
5.35pm Neighbours (s) (30281) 5.55pm One O'Clock News (s) (30281) 6.00pm One O'Clock News (s) (30281) 6.30pm Regional News Magazine (s) (30281) 7.00pm Top of the Pops (s) (30281) 7.30pm EastEnders (s) (30281) 7.55pm The Bill (s) (30281) 8.00pm The Bill (s) (30281) 8.30pm The Bill (s) (30281) 8.55pm The Bill (s) (30281) 9.00pm The Bill (s) (30281) 9.30pm The Bill (s) (30281) 9.55pm The Bill (s) (30281) 10.00pm The Bill (s) (30281) 10.30pm The Bill (s) (30281) 10.55pm The Bill (s) (30281) 11.00pm The Bill (s) (30281) 11.30pm The Bill (s) (30281) 11.55pm The Bill (s) (30281) 12.00am The Bill (s) (30281)

- BBC2**
- 6.00am Open University: Disappearing Childhood (2843377) 6.25pm Biology (2599984) 6.50pm Working with Systems (5757938)
7.15pm See Hear Breakfast News (8094008)
7.30pm Shogun (s) (30281) 7.55pm The Bill (s) (30281) 8.00pm The Bill (s) (30281) 8.30pm The Bill (s) (30281) 8.55pm The Bill (s) (30281) 9.00pm The Bill (s) (30281) 9.30pm The Bill (s) (30281) 9.55pm The Bill (s) (30281) 10.00pm The Bill (s) (30281) 10.30pm The Bill (s) (30281) 10.55pm The Bill (s) (30281) 11.00pm The Bill (s) (30281) 11.30pm The Bill (s) (30281) 11.55pm The Bill (s) (30281) 12.00am The Bill (s) (30281)

- BBC3**
- 6.00am GMTV (2137948)
9.25pm Win, Lose or Draw (s) (3818445)
9.55pm Regional News (s) (30281) 10.00pm The Time... the Place (s) (1358280)
10.35pm This Morning (15218087)
12.20pm Regional News (s) (30281) 12.30pm News and weather (s) (30281) 12.55pm Shortland Street (s) (30281) 1.25pm Coronation Street (s) (30281) 2.00pm Home and Away (s) (30281) 2.25pm Chain Letters (s) (30281) 2.55pm Newsnight (s) (30281) 3.30pm Newsnight (s) (30281) 3.55pm Newsnight (s) (30281) 4.30pm Newsnight (s) (30281) 4.55pm Newsnight (s) (30281) 5.00pm Newsnight (s) (30281) 5.30pm Newsnight (s) (30281) 5.55pm Newsnight (s) (30281) 6.00pm Newsnight (s) (30281) 6.30pm Newsnight (s) (30281) 6.55pm Newsnight (s) (30281) 7.00pm Newsnight (s) (30281) 7.30pm Newsnight (s) (30281) 7.55pm Newsnight (s) (30281) 8.00pm Newsnight (s) (30281) 8.30pm Newsnight (s) (30281) 8.55pm Newsnight (s) (30281) 9.00pm Newsnight (s) (30281) 9.30pm Newsnight (s) (30281) 9.55pm Newsnight (s) (30281) 10.00pm Newsnight (s) (30281) 10.30pm Newsnight (s) (30281) 10.55pm Newsnight (s) (30281) 11.00pm Newsnight (s) (30281) 11.30pm Newsnight (s) (30281) 11.55pm Newsnight (s) (30281) 12.00am Newsnight (s) (30281)

- BBC4**
- 6.00am GMTV (2137948)
9.25pm Win, Lose or Draw (s) (3818445)
9.55pm Regional News (s) (30281) 10.00pm The Time... the Place (s) (1358280)
10.35pm This Morning (15218087)
12.20pm Regional News (s) (30281) 12.30pm News and weather (s) (30281) 12.55pm Shortland Street (s) (30281) 1.25pm Coronation Street (s) (30281) 2.00pm Home and Away (s) (30281) 2.25pm Chain Letters (s) (30281) 2.55pm Newsnight (s) (30281) 3.30pm Newsnight (s) (30281) 3.55pm Newsnight (s) (30281) 4.30pm Newsnight (s) (30281) 4.55pm Newsnight (s) (30281) 5.00pm Newsnight (s) (30281) 5.30pm Newsnight (s) (30281) 5.55pm Newsnight (s) (30281) 6.00pm Newsnight (s) (30281) 6.30pm Newsnight (s) (30281) 6.55pm Newsnight (s) (30281) 7.00pm Newsnight (s) (30281) 7.30pm Newsnight (s) (30281) 7.55pm Newsnight (s) (30281) 8.00pm Newsnight (s) (30281) 8.30pm Newsnight (s) (30281) 8.55pm Newsnight (s) (30281) 9.00pm Newsnight (s) (30281) 9.30pm Newsnight (s) (30281) 9.55pm Newsnight (s) (30281) 10.00pm Newsnight (s) (30281) 10.30pm Newsnight (s) (30281) 10.55pm Newsnight (s) (30281) 11.00pm Newsnight (s) (30281) 11.30pm Newsnight (s) (30281) 11.55pm Newsnight (s) (30281) 12.00am Newsnight (s) (30281)

- BBC5**
- 6.00am GMTV (2137948)
9.25pm Win, Lose or Draw (s) (3818445)
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10.35pm This Morning (15218087)
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JUDO 41

BRITON NOTCHES
UNIQUE HONOUR
UNDER HIS BELT

SPORT

THURSDAY FEBRUARY 22 1996

RUGBY UNION 41

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TO CHANGE CODE
IN WINTER SALE

Emphatic victory for India exposes the lack of strength in West Indies' batting

Honours go to Tendulkar in battle of greats

BY ALAN LEE, CRICKET CORRESPONDENT

GWALIOR (West Indies won toss): India (2pts) beat West Indies by five wickets

THE first glamour game of the World Cup did not live up to its demanding billing but it was instructive for all that. India, roared to a resounding victory by a partisan 30,000-strong crowd, may be good enough to get by if and when Sachin Tendulkar fails, but West Indies' unhealthy dependence upon Brian Lara will surely be their downfall.

Lara might have been unlucky yesterday. He was out for only two when the umpire, Khizar Hayat, of Pakistan, adjudged there was bat as well as pad in his deflection down the leg side off Javagal Srinath. It was a dubious decision and Lara stood at the crease for a while, but it was such a devastating blow to West Indies that their self-belief instantly vanished.

Richie Richardson, the West Indies captain, said: "Maybe the umpire thought Lara was out, but I thought differently, the batsman thought differently and most of you watching must also have thought differently. I am disappointed at the result because I don't think our batting is as weak to be bowled out for 173."

Yesterday's evidence, however, suggests that, without Lara, West Indies no longer have the strength of batting to trouble the best. A total of 173 looked woefully inadequate on

a blameless pitch and, although the Indians stumbled twice in their reply, superior depth and conviction was decisive. Amid flares, firecrackers and typical Indian delirium, the hosts won with 62 balls in hand and remain favourites to win Group A and, quite possibly, to meet England in the last eight.

Lara has some catching up to do if he is to take the batting honours in this competition. Tendulkar followed his unbeaten century against Kenya

the game has no boundaries for him in the coming decade. Crucially, however, India have other jewels in their collection and two of them are bowlers. Srinath's opening spell yesterday brought him two for 14 from seven overs and he was not flattered, while three more wickets for Anil Kumble indicated that he will be a rival to Shane Warne as the most influential spin bowler in the tournament.

Richardson had won an important toss and declared before play that he considered 300 a reasonable target. With Campbell and Lara gone inside six overs, he was soon revising his estimate, but 47 from Richardson and 38 from Chandepaul revived the innings before three wickets fell for eight in the middle overs.

Thereafter, damage limitation was the best to which West Indies could aspire. India fielded more positively than of old and their performance was marred only by a tardy over rate and some over-zealous appealing.

If West Indies were to have a chance, Curtly Ambrose had to strike early. He did not let them down, bowling Jadeja in his first over and Sidhu in his third. But their discipline faltered with a stream of no-balls as Tendulkar and his captain, Mohammad Azharuddin, looked to have taken the game beyond them with a third-wicket stand of 79 in 16 overs.

"Tendulkar was great and I hope he continues like this," Azharuddin said. "I was not upset when Jadeja and Sidhu got out early. I, myself, may have gone to a poor shot but by then I was sure we'd win."

India betrayed signs of complacency when three wickets were foolishly sacrificed, the worst of them Tendulkar's run-out in a rare loss of understanding with his old school mate, Vinod Kambli. At 127 for five there was a hint of the exciting finish this event still awaits, but Kambli and Mongia dispelled the thought, at first calmly and then with a rush of heady strokes.



Lara, the West Indies batsman, walks dejectedly away after his controversial dismissal for only two runs while India celebrate yesterday

Reeve takes positive approach

DERMOT REEVE arrived in Pakistan last night in time to join up with England's cricket World Cup party on the eve of their match with Holland, in Peshawar, and admitted that he thought he had played his last game for England (Simon Wilde writes). Now he knows he has the chance, as the central all-rounder, to play a key part in his team's hopes of a successful campaign.

Reeve's arrival, to replace the injured Craig White, restores the England squad to 14 fit players, with Graeme Hick, Neil Smith and Robin Smith having all recovered from their recent ailments. England yesterday declined to disclose

the make-up of their team to face Holland.

As expected, Reeve, who was not considered for the seven one-day internationals in South Africa and then omitted from the original World Cup squad.

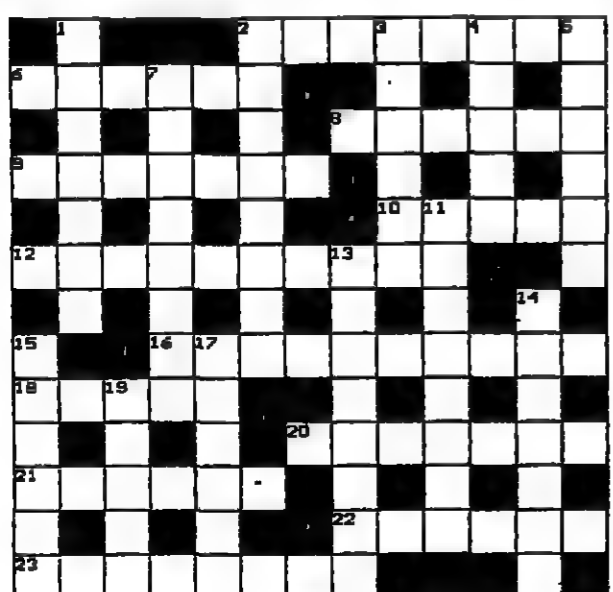
"You are not going to be jumping up and down or doing handstands when your heart was set on something," he said. "It was the lowest point of my cricket career."

Reeve, 32, expressed his unhappiness after he was picked for only two of the seven one-day internationals in South Africa and then omitted from the original World Cup squad.

"You are not going to be jumping up and down or doing handstands when your heart was set on something," he said. "It was the lowest point of my cricket career."

TIMES TWO CROSSWORD

No 711 in association with
BRITISH MIDLAND



ACROSS

- 2 Improvident optimist (Copperfield) (8)
- 6 Conquer, put down (6)
- 8 Manage to get (6)
- 9 Shows exuberance; Millais picture (7)
- 10 Of the nose (5)
- 12 Convenience store (6,4)
- 16 State of holding office (10)
- 18 (Ill-gotten) money (5)
- 20 Unlawful (7)
- 21 Unequaled (6)
- 22 No. of Israel tribes, of apostles (6)
- 23 Boston, Mad Hatter both had one (3,5)

DOWN

- 1 Unfairly taken advantage of (3,4)
- 3 Sudden, dramatic (rise) (8)
- 3 (Animal) lacking normal pigment (6)
- 4 Sc. hillside; sounds like harsh cries (5)
- 5 Cause continued resentment (6)
- 7 Carefree and confident (8)
- 11 Desire (esp. for food) (8)
- 13 Lowliness (8)
- 14 Have success (with) (7)
- 15 Proudly display (6)
- 17 Cloud (of stars) (6)
- 19 Country; Cockney mate (5)

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Post your entry to Times Two Crossword, PO Box 6886, London E2 8SP to arrive by next Monday. The winners' names and solution will appear on Wednesday.

Name/Address

SOLUTION TO NO 710

ACROSS: 1 Surprise 5 Slug 9 Admix 10 Shotgun 11 Bolshoi
12 Torch 13 Reprehend 18 Lapse 20 Horatio 22 Stopgap
23 Venus 24 Aard 25 Plangent
DOWN: 1 Shabby 2 Rambler 3 Ranch 4 Sistine Chapel
6 Lager 7 Gung-ho 8 Bottle 14 Pledge 15 Detente 16 Alaska
17 Cosset 19 Prone 21 Raven

Capriati returns the winning way

BY OUR SPORTS STAFF

JENNIFER CAPRIATI's much-anticipated return to the Women's Tennis Association (WTA) Tour circuit produced a victory achieved without undue exertion in Essen, Germany, yesterday.

Capriati, 19, has endured a prolonged process of recovery from burn-out and the effects of drugs, but yesterday she made light of her troubles in casting aside the challenge of Kristie Boogert, of Holland, 6-1, 6-2 in only 51 minutes.

The American, who dropped out of competitive tennis after defeat in the first round of the 1993 US Open, made up for bouts of apparent nervousness and a tentative service by producing a succession of precise returns and double-handed backhand winners.

Boogert, who was the seventh seed at the Essen tournament and who is ranked No 32 in the world, was unable to find her rhythm at any stage. "It was fun out there," Capriati said after her first competitive match in 15 months. "It meant the world to me. I felt happy and I was happy with my playing."

Despite appearing tense during the match, Capriati smiled broadly and punched the air after concluding a triumphant comeback. Her return had been scheduled for last week at the Paris Open but she withdrew at the last minute, giving the reason as a strained hip muscle.

She accepted a wild-card invitation to play in the indoor event at Essen, where she now meets Barbara Schett, a 19-year-old Austrian ranked No 56 on the WTA list. Capriati had lost weight and

seemed in better playing condition than in November 1994, when she aborted a comeback after losing in three sets to Anke Huber, of Germany, in Philadelphia.

However, a long struggle awaits the former teenage prodigy once ranked No 6 in the world. Unlike Monica Seles, Capriati was afforded no privileges on her return by the WTA and she will have to work her way up from the bottom of the rankings.

Yesterday she began that



Capriati: nervousness

process by breaking Boogert's service to love and moving swiftly into a 3-0 lead. After dropping her service to let Boogert back into the match, Capriati used her powerful backhand to good effect in taking the next three games and the first set. She eventually ran out the winner on her first match point, when Boogert sent a return wide.

"The way she was playing today, she was hitting the ball great," Boogert said. "I think she's going to make a very good comeback."

McGrath leaves FAI in quandary

BY OUR SPORTS STAFF

ONCE a model of success borne of consistency and continuity, the foundations of Irish football have suddenly begun to crumble. Hard on the heels of the resignation of the Football Association of Ireland (FAI) chief executive last week, the FAI's director of coaching, Joe McGrath, announced yesterday that he is leaving to take up a similar post in New Zealand.

McGrath informed the FAI of his plans just hours before its executive council was due to meet in Dublin last night to discuss the departure of the chief executive, Sean Connolly, six days ago. It was also due to review the handling of Jack Charlton's resignation as the Ireland coach in December and the search for his successor.

Mick McCarthy was appointed Ireland manager earlier this month, but within 24 hours of the appointment, the FAI president, Louis Killoyne, said that the former Ireland captain had not been his first choice to fill the post. Allegations surrounding a shortfall of money from the FAI's allocation of tickets for the 1994 World Cup finals are also expected to be debated.

Caledonian Thistle's Tonnets Scottish Cup quarter-final against Rangers has been switched to Dundee United's Tannadice ground, but Rangers will visit Inverness in 1996. The Scottish champions have agreed to send a team at the start of next season to mark the opening of Caledonian's new £3.5 million stadium in Inverness as compensation for the Bell's Scottish League third division

club, which had hoped the cup tie on Saturday, March 9 would be the last played at its 5,500-capacity Telford Street ground. The Scottish Football Association had ruled against Rangers visiting for safety reasons and also blocked any chance of a lucrative switch to Ibrox.

"Tannadice was the suggestion, with the fact that it has underlain heating a major factor," the Thistle chairman, Doug McGilvray, said. "We wanted the game to go ahead."

Taylor returns 40
Horton to spend 40

in Inverness at Telford Street, but that will not be possible. Now we will go to Dundee, with Rangers having 5,000 tickets and us taking 7,500, which I am convinced will be sold very quickly.

"However, Rangers have made a marvellous gesture to us by agreeing to send a team north in September or October next season to mark the opening of our new stadium. It means football fans in this area will get the chance to see Caledonian Thistle against Rangers in Inverness as we would have wished."

England's tour to the Far East before the European championship finals get under way in the summer has been confirmed by the Football Association. England will play China A in Peking on Thursday, May 23, and then a Hong Kong Select XI in the colony three days later. The England squad will fly out for the brief tour on May 20, returning to this country on May 28.

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the Republicans' unity

Sister is the planner of victorious campaign

FROM TOM RHODES IN WASHINGTON

WHEN America's top television talk-show host wanted some swift reaction from the winners' enclosure in New Hampshire, it was Bay Buchanan who made herself immediately available to appear on *Larry King Live*.

In measured tones, the sister of Pat Buchanan told the millions who watch Mr King's nightly spot that the stunning result had proved beyond doubt the widespread appeal of her brother's conservatism of the heart.

"He's reached out to those millions of Americans who are working out there who are concerned about their jobs," she said. "He speaks to them directly about it, and they recognise a real leader when they see one."

Among her campaign staff, many might say exactly the

dox in the relationship between Buchanan brother and sister — a highly successful combination which has been compared to Bobby Kennedy and JFK, and one which has carved a neat impression of family unity on a campaign that values family above all else.

Behind the scenes, the image is a little different. Ms Buchanan is accused of micromanaging every detail and keeping both dissent and access to Pat himself to a minimum. She is very tough, according to close associates, and ideas other than her own are often ignored.

An obsession with politics started early and she worked closely with her brother on the Nixon campaign. In 1981, having worked as treasurer for his campaign, Ronald Reagan appointed her the youngest ever Treasurer of the United States.

Six years ago she ran for California state treasurer, losing in the Republican primary. It was Bay Buchanan who insisted her brother should stand in 1992 and helped to orchestrate his notorious appearance at the Republican convention in Houston, where he unleashed his guns in the cultural war for America.

Before he entered the race for 1996, the conservative commentator made certain Bay would be by his side. "Pat says 'Where are you going to be?' because he wants me at the helm, and that's the bottom line," she said recently. "He runs if I will do this, and it's a sacrifice for me, and it's one that I've enjoyed thoroughly."

Now she is supporting a man who has written that the birthrate of 1.7 children to each Western woman, compared to the free fertility of the "black, brown and yellow peoples" amounts to "racial suicide" who declared that "The morning bird builds the nest".

Ms Buchanan, however, rarely counters his more outspoken statements. She has little time for what she deems a liberal stereotype of the conservative woman cooking in the kitchen. For many American conservatives under the Buchanan banner, family values are no longer an opposition to women working outside the home, but to homosexual rights, abortion, and secular curriculums in the classroom.

same about Angela "Bay" Buchanan, adviser and field general to the man of the moment. She is the only woman in charge of a presidential campaign in America and appears, to those on the outside at least, ill placed at the helm of a ship whose family, faith and country campaign seems entirely inhospitable to women such as herself.

Bay Buchanan is a divorced woman bringing up three young sons on her own; has a full-time job; and left the Catholic Church for the Tabernacle when she married a Mormon lawyer. Indeed, she might be viewed as a typical example of masculine feminism rather than her brother's perception of the traditional woman.

But that remains the para-

One Buchanan not suitable as White House role model

BY LEYLA LINTON

AMERICA has already had a President Buchanan — a Democrat who presided over the collapse of the Union and accelerated the outbreak of Civil War in 1861.

Like his namesake, James Buchanan was of Irish stock. The son of a merchant farmer, the fifteenth President of the United States was born in Pennsylvania.

But in contrast to flamboyant Pat Buchanan, James Buchanan, the only unmarried American President, was so quiet that during his 1856 election campaign Republicans joked that he was dead of lockjaw.

Pat Buchanan will certainly not seek to emulate his namesake. Not only was James Buchanan's presidency a professional disaster, he was also homosexual. He had an affair with William Rufus King, who later became Vice-President to James Buchanan's predecessor in the presidency.



James Buchanan: saw collapse of the Union

Buchanan had a long career in public service. He was elected to the Senate in 1834 and unsuccessfully sought the presidential nomination in 1844, 1848 and 1852. He was eventually elected President by a narrow margin after convincing Southern planters, who controlled the Democratic Party, of his support for slavery.

A slave-owner himself, Buchanan was best known for his support of pro-slavery in the mini-Civil War in Kansas, known as "Bleeding Kansas", which was at its height between 1854 and 1856. As President, he faced a financial crisis as well as the anti-slavery struggle that he tried unsuccessfully to keep out of national politics.

Dr Eric Halpern, a lecturer in American history at University College London, said: "He was a fairly lacklustre politician, the wrong man in the right place." Towards the end of his tenure, Buchanan lamented to his friend, General Winfield Scott: "The office of President of the United States is not fit for a gentleman to hold."

Eventually he was undermined by a split in his party which led to the election of the Republican Abraham Lincoln as President in 1860. With the Southern states' secession, the Civil War followed in the next year.

Buchanan retired discredited, but sought to support the Union cause until his death in 1868. Dr Mark Kaplanoff, of Cambridge University, said: "He was an ineffectual man who hastened the coming of the Civil War."



Snoop Doggy Dog, right, is hugged by his bodyguard, McKinley Lee, after both were acquitted of murder

Mistakes help to clear rap singer in murder trial

FROM QUENTIN LETTS IN NEW YORK

LOS ANGELES prosecutors have lost another high-profile case with the acquittal of a street-tough black musician who was charged with murder.

Snoop Doggy Dog, a rap singer whose songs are full of references to violence and drugs, was cleared of the murder in 1993 of a rival gang member.

One of the defence lawyers in the case was Johnnie Cochran, the lead attorney in last year's O.J. Simpson trial. Snoop Doggy Dog, charged under his real name, Calvin Broadus, faces a lesser charge of voluntary manslaughter in connection with the 1993 shooting, but his acquittal for murder revived memories of the Simpson and Rodney King cases.

The 6ft 4in singer and his bodyguard were accused of murdering Philip Woldemariam, a 20-year-old Ethiopian hoodlum, after he made a rude gesture to them one hot August night.

The accused did not dispute that the shooting took place,

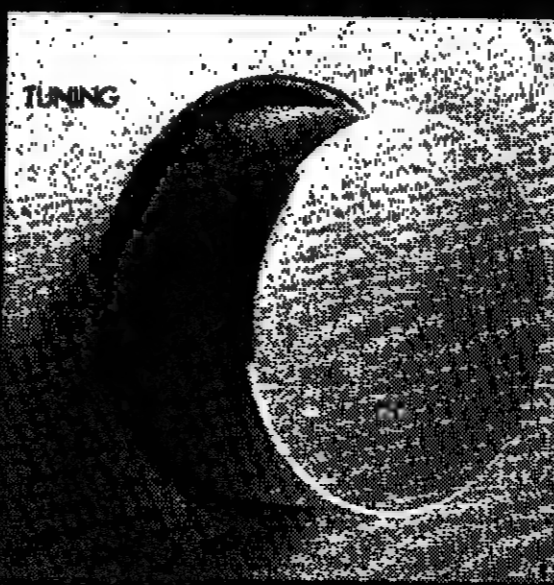
but claimed that Woldemariam was armed and that they acted in self-defence.

Prosecutors, arguing that Woldemariam was shot in the back, quoted from one of Snoop Doggy Dog's "gangsta rap" songs, *Murder Was the Case*. The song repeats the words: "Murder is the crime they committed".

Gangsta rap is an aggressive form of music which reflects, and arguably perpetuates, the drug-ridden, gun-toting, sexually loose way of life in the grubbier reaches of Los Angeles.

Jurors in the Snoop Doggy Dog case reportedly rolled their eyes early on in the trial when the police failed to produce important evidence such as the victim's clothes and a cartridge case. They had been destroyed by mistake before the case reached court.

Before the verdict was announced, Snoop Doggy Dog managed to maintain his trademark cool, but on hearing the news he hugged his bodyguard, McKinley Lee, who was also acquitted.



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EU agrees truce in Eta extradition dispute

FROM CHARLES BREMNER IN BRUSSELS AND EDWARD OWEN IN MADRID

EUROPEAN Union ministers healed a dispute between Spain and Belgium yesterday which was threatening the shaky edifice of the Schengen agreement, the pact on open borders among seven continental states.

The seven agreed to tighten co-operation on extradition to avoid a repetition of the dispute that flared this month when Belgium's highest court refused to send home two Basque separatists to face terrorism charges.

Spain, outraged over the sanctuary granted to guerrilla suspects by a partner state, had withdrawn its Brussels ambassador and threatened to pull out of judicial co-operation if its grievances were not answered. The Interior Ministers, meeting in The Hague, agreed to seek ways of modifying the article of the Schengen treaty covering extradition.

It was not clear, however, how similar cases could be avoided, given that the Schengen states would be unlikely to agree to override the sovereignty of national

courts in such sensitive matters as the extradition of suspects claiming political persecution. The dispute over extradition is just one area of discord in an agreement which is still far from fully operational almost a year after it came into effect.

In the meantime, Jon Idigoras, joint spokesman for the political wing of Eta, the Basque separatist organisation, was detained yesterday



Idigoras questioned about Eta violence

morning in his home town of Amorebieta, near Bilbao. His detention comes two days after an estimated 350,000 people demonstrated in the Spanish capital against the current upsurge in violence during the run-up to a general election on March 3.

Señor Idigoras, 58, was arrested after his party, Herri Batasuna (Popular Unity), tried to distribute a video showing three masked and armed members of Eta (Basque Homeland and Liberty) explaining their policies. The Basque separatists knew they were flouting the law by sending the video to television stations for use during the free air time allotted for party political broadcasts.

The Basque autonomous police force, the Ertzaintza, was due to transfer Señor Idigoras, whose craggy features are as well known to Spaniards as the beard of Gerry Adams, the Sinn Féin president, is known to Britons. He was taken to the national court in Madrid for questioning by Baltasar Garçon, an invest-

gating judge. Señor Idigoras faces charges of collaborating with "an armed group".

Herri Batasuna said yesterday: "The big words of Spanish political leaders are worthless. The huge demonstrations in Spanish cities are worthless. They are not going to bring any solution to the actual violent conflict. It is a political conflict that requires political solutions. There is a proposal on the table in an absolutely democratic text and the Government has this great challenge to confront."

Eta demands an amnesty for about 500 convicted guerrillas in Spanish jails, the "release" of the Spanish "forces of occupation" and the right to self-determination.

Political violence rather than issues such as unemployment is the main issue in the present Spanish election campaign. The separatists are opposed to a political settlement because only a minority of Basques, 16 per cent in the last regional elections, would vote for the independence that Eta and Herri Batasuna seek.



A legal test case over van Gogh's 'Jardin à Auvers' has ended in the state paying compensation for keeping it in France

Brush with art world costs the State £19m

FROM BEN MACINTYRE IN PARIS

AN ART collector banned from selling his van Gogh painting abroad must be paid £145 million (£19 million) in compensation by the French State, the highest civil court ruled this week.

In 1989 Jacques Walter, now 57, attempted to sell his van Gogh masterpiece, *Jardin à Auvers*, on the international art market, but the Culture Ministry declared that the picture was a "national treasure" that could not leave French soil.

He sued the Government, claiming that the ban had forced him to sell the painting in France for a fraction of what it would have fetched on the inflated 1980s art market.

Jardin à Auvers, completed by van Gogh just days before he committed suicide in 1890, was bought by M. Walter in New York in 1955 for the equivalent of £160,000.

By 1992, M. Walter had run up large debts and put the painting up for auction. Bidding was restricted to French citizens and it was sold for £7 million, about one-sixth of its estimated value on the international market.

In 1994, a Paris court ordered the French State to pay £55.5 million to compensate the collector. An appeals court later reduced the award to £19 million.

Both the Government and M. Walter appealed again. On Tuesday, the appeals court

decision was upheld by the Cour de Cassation, bringing the landmark case to an end. "Can the State, on the pretext of defending the national heritage, despoil the heritage of private citizens?" M. Walter's lawyer demanded.

The *Jardin à Auvers* case has been closely watched by the French art world and this week's ruling is the first time the State has been forced to pay out such a claim.

Under a 1913 law, the State can prevent the export of artworks by classifying them as "historic treasures" and paying indemnity to the owners. The verdict in M. Walter's favour is expected to prompt similar claims.

The case has also brought with it a whiff of corruption. Testifying in February 1994, M. Walter's son, Jean-Jacques Walter, alleged that his father's lawyer had twice reported that an export licence could be obtained by bribing the Minister of Culture.

The younger M. Walter claimed that Jack Lang, then Minister of Culture for most of the Mitterrand era, and François Léotard, who replaced him between 1986 and 1988, had demanded £5 million and £3 million respectively. Both have angrily denied the allegations.

Jean-Jacques Walter hailed the verdict as a "victory for citizens against the intrigues of the State".

Blizzard brings snow to Majorca

BY EDWARD OWEN

THE holiday island of Majorca in the Mediterranean was blanketed by a rare snowstorm yesterday and the northern half of Spain was largely paralysed by blizzards which cut rail and road routes and closed most airports.

The Basque, Cantabrian and Asturias regions of Spain were worst hit. Mountain rescue teams were out in force and people stranded in refuges were advised by radio to stay put. Hundreds were marooned in vehicles and an estimated 20,000 villagers were cut off.

The Spanish Traffic Department reported that roads were impassable in 300 locations and that it had received more than 300,000 calls from the public seeking advice.

Weather forecast, page 22

German shipyard stalls creditors

FROM MICHAEL KALLENBACH IN BONN

GERMANY'S largest shipbuilder, Bremer Vulkan, facing losses of more than a billion marks (almost £450 million), yesterday decided to stall bankruptcy proceedings.

The company opted to file for protection from creditors while it tries to work out a survival deal and renegotiate credit facilities. Commentators regarded the move as a sign of the firm's future and said they doubted that the 23,000 jobs could be saved.

Günter Restedt, the Economics Minister, said he had contacted European Union officials in Brussels about a rescue deal. However, a bleak picture was painted by Johannes Ludwig, State Secretary in the Economics Ministry, who said anyone who believed Vulkan could be saved was "living in cloud-cuckoo-land".

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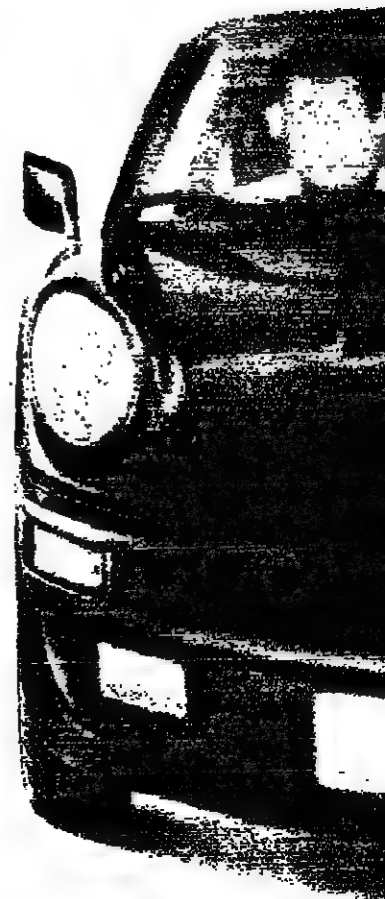
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I risked our baby's life for the sake of her looks

A delicate skull operation has had bad publicity after some children were misdiagnosed. But Halina Kierkuc is sure she made the right decision for her daughter

My twin daughters were about six weeks old when I began to suspect something was wrong. I remember the day, even the second, a couple of weeks later that I knew for sure. An old school friend had dropped in for tea. As she gazed down at them lying side by side, I watched her smile evaporate.

I knew what was coming. "Georgia's getting a really odd-shaped forehead, isn't she?" I started cracking feeble jokes about my Eastern European ancestry and our dashing Slavonic brows. But my stomach turned. For the past few weeks, I had watched silently as my baby's head had begun to bulge, almost imperceptibly at first, around the temples. At this stage, I might not have noticed at all had it not been for her almost identical twin Clementine, whose head was, by now, an entirely different shape.

Georgia was suffering from a rare skull condition, craniosynostosis. Around 250 children are born each year in the UK with one or more of the network of tiny "expansion" joints which criss-cross their heads prematurely fused. It can be hereditary. More often, as in our case, its causes are a complete mystery. When these babies' brains begin to grow, their skulls are pushed into increasingly odd shapes to compensate for the lack of "give" along the sealed-up seams. As Barry Jones, the

director of Great Ormond Street Hospital's cranio-facial unit, explains: "It is like blowing up a balloon constricted by an elastic band. As the pressure inside increases, the balloon bulges or flattens on either side of the constriction." At worst, craniosynostosis can cause brain damage. Untreated, it will certainly cause disfigurement, sometimes of



both the skull and the face. Many parents who read last weekend's reports about the children in Leeds who were misdiagnosed as suffering from this condition, and subsequently underwent painful surgery, may now hesitate to take action if they suspect their children have similar problems. My advice, based on our experience, is that if you have the slightest doubt, you should seek help immediately from one of the three specialist units in the UK which are equipped to deal with the problem. Go anywhere else and you are unlikely to get the treatment your child desperately needs. Mr Jones says: "To treat this condition properly requires a number of specialists from different disciplines working

together as a team. Without that very particular combination of expertise, a child is unlikely to be diagnosed or treated appropriately."

This is what happened to my family. Despite my suspicions, it was many weeks before Georgia's condition was diagnosed — a few months longer and she might have been permanently deformed. At first I kept my fears quiet. The girls had been born two months prematurely at St Thomas' Hospital in London and had only just come home after five weeks in a special-care baby unit. If something had been wrong, I rationalised, surely the teams of paediatricians at the hospital would have spotted it?

I comforted myself with the thought that no one except me and one friend had sensed anything was wrong — neither health visitors, GPs nor my own family had noticed anything amiss — and I was only too happy to put my worries down to a new mother's paranoia. A few weeks later we returned to St Thomas' outpatients for the twins' routine check-up. A nurse came to weigh them, and measured Georgia's head circumference several times, before disappearing abruptly. By the time we got into the paediatrician's office, I was panicking. He examined her skull immediately, but seemed unperturbed. "She won't grow out of it," he said, "but when she's a teenager she can wear her



Georgia Kierkuc today, and (inset left) aged six months, just after her operation. Photograph by Peter Nicholls

fringe long." He reassured us there was nothing seriously wrong. Over the next month, Georgia's features began to change. As the top of her head elongated, the whole shape of her face altered. Something was going

horribly wrong, though we could hardly bear to think about it. Much less did we know what to do in the face of so much "expert" opinion that suggested there was nothing to worry about.

We were lucky. Georgia was born with a large birthmark on her neck which could be treated. I made an appointment with a plastic surgeon who specialised in laser treatment. The first thing he said when he saw her was: "What are you doing about her head?" I froze. He immediately told me I should forget about her neck and concentrate on her skull. He knew of another plastic surgeon in London who specialised in her sort of "problem". Georgia and I saw Barry

Jones at Great Ormond Street a few days later. The decision that confronted us was stark. Georgia's particular form of craniosynostosis was unlikely to cause brain damage, and the chance of developmental problems for her was about 13 per cent. But she would, inevitably, be deformed without surgery.

The operation was a major one, though, and needed to be performed quickly while her skull was still soft. It is an even more difficult procedure for older children. Working in tandem with a neurosurgeon, Mr Jones would have to peel away part of my daughter's scalp, then remove and remodel the bones of the front of

her skull to give her brain the chance to grow into a normal shape. This delicate "carpentry" takes place directly on top of the membranes which cover the brain itself. There were obvious risks. I will never forget the next 24 hours agonising over whether to risk our baby's life for the sake of the way she would look. Many of our friends advised against it, but watching her with her twin sister sitting beside her — the same, but so perfectly different — I knew, for Georgia's sake, that I had no choice. At Great Ormond Street, we had been shown the pictures of other children who had come out of the surgery successfully. They were, without exception, so bruised and battered they were barely recognisable. Yet

within days they had begun to recover. We asked to wait until after Christmas to have the surgery. On the morning of her six-month "half birthday", January 21 1993, she was admitted to hospital. The next day, she was wheeled away for the four-hour operation. My husband and I walked the streets.

When we saw her again she was in intensive care, still asleep, and with a drain protruding from a thin gauze cap on her head. I had steeled myself for the very worst, but miraculously, she was completely unbruised and remained that way. Even more miraculously, her head and face were already a different shape, and continued to improve over the following months as she "grew into" the surgery. Within four days, Georgia was back at home with us, her scalp stapled together with metal clips which were removed to outpatients a week later. Of course, we will never be sure what trauma she suffered or how much pain she felt. But there are no signs, three years later, that she has been affected in the long-term.

Her skull is a normal shape and the only scar that remains is a pencil-thin line stretching from ear to ear beneath her hairline — a source of great fascination for her school friends and slightly ghoulie pride for Georgia.

He said:
"What are you doing about her head?"
I froze

At her last check-up, over a year ago, I was assured that her head was so strong that she was fit to play rugby for the All Blacks. The threat of developmental problems is gone. And I think she looks like an angel, though she rarely behaves like one.

The last word should go to Barry Jones. "If you have any concerns about the growth or shape of your child's head, go to a GP or paediatrician who should refer you to one of the three supra-regional centres in London, Birmingham or Oxford. These are expensive units to run, but they are funded centrally, so GPs and health authorities should know that they won't pay a cent for the referral or treatment." And to parents his message is simple: "We can treat craniosynostosis very successfully. At Great Ormond Street alone we are operating on 80 children a year. In experienced hands, the risks are very small." As a parent, I believe the results justify those risks and I think in years to come Georgia will agree.

● Cranio-facial Support Group: Trem Rafra, Earlswood, Cheshire. Great NPG 0129 164507

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Dealing with prostate trouble, from cancer to enlargement

WHATEVER the ethics of President Mitterrand's doctor disclosing details of his late patient's medical condition, it has served a useful purpose in encouraging many men who have prostate cancer.

It seems that Mitterrand had had hormone treatment for many years — some reports suggest for nearly 15 years — which was designed to inhibit the growth of the tumour which had already spread beyond the prostate at the time of diagnosis. Despite his condition Mitterrand continued to feel well and remained a leading figure on the international stage until the last years.

However, suggestions in the French press last week that Mitterrand might have shed a son while taking hormonal treatment for cancer of the prostate have been greeted by doctors with some scepticism on both sides of the Channel. The avowed purpose of the treatment is to achieve chemical castration, and in that Mitterrand survived for so long it must have

been very effective. It is possible that artificial insemination using stored semen might have explained the press reports but, understandably, the late President's woman friend refuses to comment.

In over 50 per cent of cases cancer of the prostate has already spread beyond the gland by the time it is diagnosed. Since 1941 it has been known that 70 per cent of patients will respond for a variable amount of time to medical or

surgical castration. Combination of anti-androgenic drugs are now being prescribed and more than one type of treatment is being used simultaneously. There is evidence that these combined therapies significantly increase survival time but sometimes at the cost of additional side effects.

Although cancer of the prostate is second only to cancer of the lung as a cause of death in men from malignant disease, most will not

suffer from it. Conversely all men, if they live long enough, will have trouble from benign prostatic hypertrophy, enlargement of the prostate. Surgery is still the mainstay of treatment and the standard operation, transurethral resection of the prostate, is safe and effective.

However, it is frequently forgotten that many cases of benign enlargement can be treated without recourse to surgery or other invasive procedures. For centuries herbalists have had their favourite remedies but their effectiveness is open to doubt. Now the pharmaceutical industry is marketing two groups of drugs which will improve urinary flow, though not as much as surgery, and relieve symptoms. Alpha-blockers, such as Hyposcane, relax the muscles and allow the patient to urinate easily, but cause dizziness and low blood pressure. The androgen suppressors, such as Proscar, reduce the size of the prostate, but in 3 per cent of cases produce a reversible impotency.

Shout and twist

THERE are few types of delivery which can give greater satisfaction to a doctor than a well-conducted breech birth. But high the baby and the mother will have faced a delivery which carries with it an unacceptably high risk of serious complications. Evidence suggests that an elective Caesarean section would have been more likely to produce a healthy child, and a mother who would recover faster. Manually turning a baby by

pressure through the abdominal wall is no longer accepted by most obstetricians as a safe procedure. Version, the doctor's term for turning, can damage the placenta and deprive the baby of oxygen.

However, obstetricians at the Regional Medical Centre in Phoenix, Arizona, have managed to persuade a baby to change its position by startling it in the uterus. They have devised a noise, broadcast through the abdominal wall, that makes it move so violently that when it later settles down there is a good chance that it will be leading by the head. Thereafter it can be delivered normally. Treated in this way, four-fifths of babies turned spontaneously.

The trouble with veins

ONE of the most serious supposed complications of varicose veins is deep-vein thrombosis, which can cause a pulmonary embolism — a blood clot in the pulmonary artery which can be fatal. The effect of varicose veins on the likelihood of developing a DVT after surgery, or in women who take the Pill, has recently been analysed in the *British Medical Journal*. The conclusion is that varicose veins alone are unlikely to increase

the risk of a DVT, but may be a factor when other hazards, such as pelvic or abdominal surgery, are present.

Whatever the dangers of varicose veins, the problem of DVTs is still underestimated in Britain.

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When Owen Matthews laid a charge of assault in Moscow he uncovered some rough justice

Last summer I spent some time in a Russian jail. It was only a few hours, carefully shepherded on a journalistic visit by a sadistic and slightly insane warden, but it was enough to convince me that I would honestly rather die than end up there.

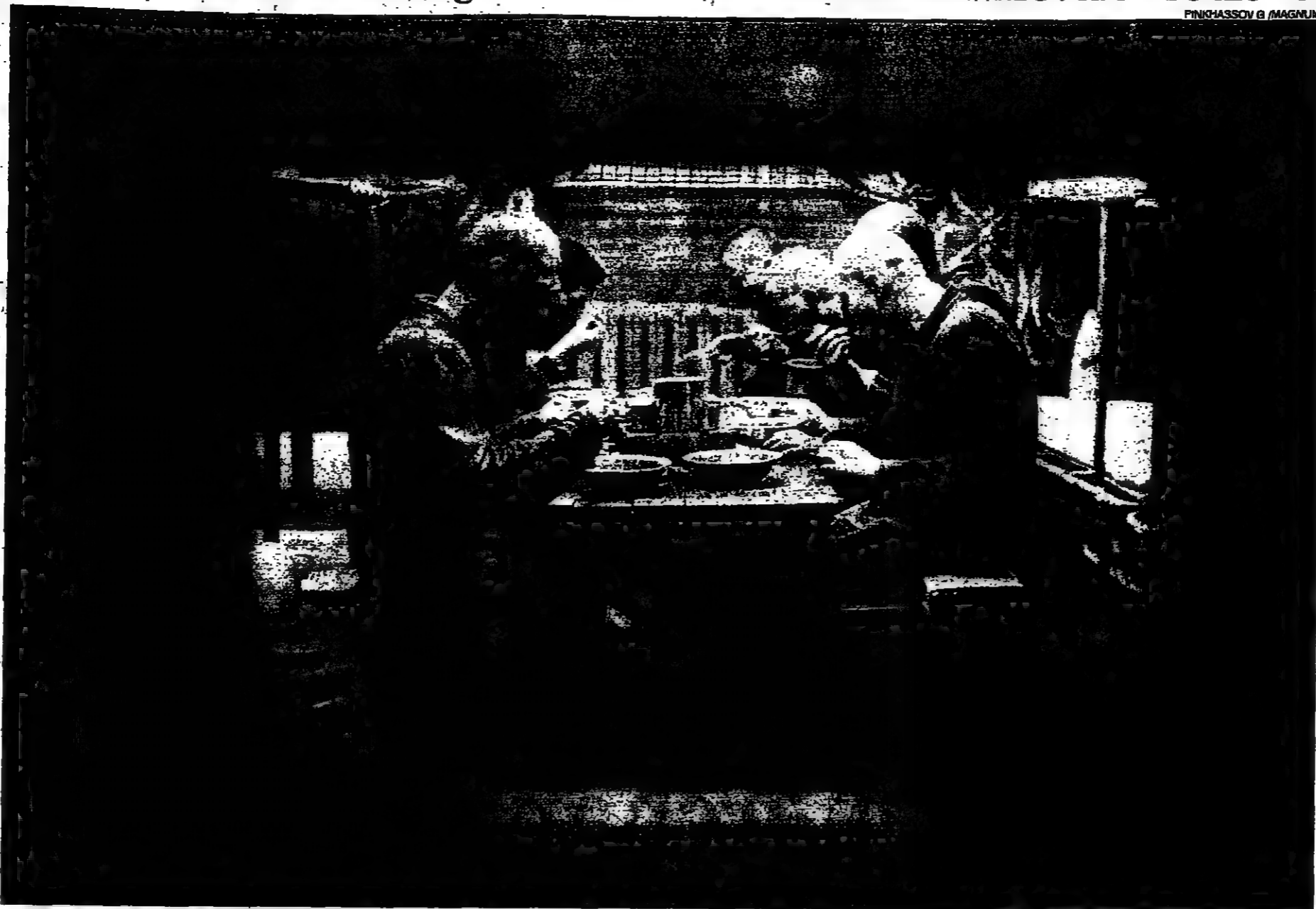
Moscow's Butirskaya prison had been designed in the 1780s for just under a third of its present number of inmates, and hadn't had a proper refit since 1878. The prisoners had 75 sq cm of living space each and were packed 140 to a cell, with one tiny window and one toilet, sleeping in shifts. I never imagined as I emerged, retching, from that stinking, Dickensian nightmare of a jail that I would be instrumental in adding two more inmates to its overcrowded cells.

Then, about a month ago, I was beaten up in a side street in central Moscow. Three men, two Tartars and one Russian, were lurching down the street, roaring drunk and obviously spoiling for some fisticuffs. Two passed me and my three friends by without incident; the third pushed into me, grabbed me by the coat, punched me in the face and sent me flying. The other two joined in, kicking me on the ground.

I got up, was punched again and fell down again for several minutes of strangely balletic and dislocated time. My friends ran away, leaving me alone in the dark, empty street. My only defender was the Russian who, once he realised that his pals were going too far, tried to pull them off me. Not very effectively.

I was saved by two men in a passing car who jumped out and chased my assailants away. My friends returned shortly afterwards with some security men, picked me up from the pavement and offered to take me for a stiff drink. And with that, the incident would have been over if, by chance, a police jeep hadn't driven by. I flagged it down, explained what had happened, climbed in and screamed off in hot pursuit of my attackers.

They hadn't got far. The trio were staggering towards Lubyanka metro station as the police car swerved to cut them off. Before they could say "police brutality" the cuffs were on and the two Tartars had been thrown (literally) into the back of the car. The Russian who had defended me they left on the street. Within 15 minutes they were



A meal break for inmates of Russia's Ekise penitentiary south of Moscow, where a work regime is enforced, discipline is tough and a mafia-style network is in operation

schoolroom-type hall, where the investigator and I sat. Solomon-like, behind a raised desk. They were in a bad state. Two brothers in their late twenties, neither of whom had been arrested before, they both had jobs and the elder one had a wife and three-year-old son. For second-degree group assault and "hooliganism" they were looking at a minimum sentence of four years in prison. They were crying.

"Matthews, I am guilty before you," said Ravi, the elder brother, his head in his hands. "What can I do to make it up to you? With one stupid action I have crossed out my whole life, my family, everything I've worked for. I beg you to forgive me."

I was horrible. A grown man in tears, begging you for mercy, is a terrible sight. Both had been so drunk they couldn't remember what had happened, even to deny it. Prison meant that they would probably never work again, could lose their right to live in Moscow, and their families would be left destitute.

"Can I drop the charges?" I sheepishly asked Ms lieutenant-colonel. "We've started the wheel spinning and it will spin till the end," she replied cryptically.

They were transferred to Butirskaya jail to await their trial, some time in April. If I hadn't been a foreigner, they might have had a chance. One of the dubious privileges of being a Westerner here is that crimes against foreigners are still treated much more seriously than those against ordinary Russians. Even so, if they had had enough money to bribe their accuser and the investigator (\$20,000 for each seems to be the going rate), or if they'd had the right connections, they could have been free after one phone call. But as it is they stand next to no chance of getting off: Russian criminal courts have a conviction rate of 97 per cent and no jury system.

None of my Russian friends has an ounce of sympathy for them. Few criminals here are caught, but those that are take the full brunt of society's growing hysteria about rising crime. So the two Tartars will almost certainly be celebrating the millennium in a labour camp in Siberia, at once perpetrators and victims of the random brutality, vindictive primitiveness and violence which for centuries have pervaded every aspect of Russian society and politics.

A dubious privilege

sitting in a giant cage in the police station and I was leaning weakly against the counter, quietly dripping blood as a policeman took my details. It was at this point that he asked me for ID and I produced my battered, Foreign Ministry press accreditation card.

Things moved very quickly after that. Russians seem to have a strange fascination for official documentation, and anything which smacks of authority commands instant attention. Like Dorothy's

magical journey to Oz, the scene suddenly changed from the drab grey of a routine evening to the glorious Technicolor of a minor international incident. Even the five policemen watching television behind the reception desk were momentarily distracted by the magical sight of that smugged, double-headed eagle government stamp and the assortment of expired Unprofor, Hungarian, Bosnian and Mongolian press cards which oozed respectability and officialdom.

even if their unshaven and bloody beaver didn't.

I was whisked upstairs to an interview room, where a harassed-looking female lieutenant-colonel assured me that this matter would be treated with the utmost seriousness. As I was to discover later, she wasn't joking. I told her, perhaps a little too vehemently, that I wanted her to lock them up for as long as possible, and preferably to throw away the key. I said that I hoped the police would beat them to within an inch of

their lives that night, and every subsequent night until there was not an unbroken bone left in their bodies. As I was being driven to hospital, I was quite ready to borrow one of the policemen's clubs and do the job myself.

But like Henry II with his "Who will rid me of this turbulent priest?" quip, I hadn't counted on the literal-mindedness of the officers of the law. When I returned the next morning I met one of the policemen who had arrested the two men the night before.

"How are you, Owen?" he said, clapping me on the shoulder. "Don't worry about those two. They didn't get bored last night. Ha, ha, ha."

In the interview room with the lieutenant-colonel I wrote down what had happened, for the record. Or rather, I gave her a blow-by-blow account, and she dictated back what I should write in stilted officialese. The other witnesses simply signed handwritten copies of my version of events.

My Russian aunt also did her bit. Unknown to me, she

phoned up her old colleagues from the prosecutor's office, where she had worked for 30 years, and the Ministry of Justice, where her late husband had been deputy minister. Phone calls were made. Fates were sealed.

Three days after the incident, my bruises had gone down and I was more or less recovered from my slight concussion. The two Tartars, however, seemed conversely to be picking up new bruises daily. The accused were led, one by one, into a grubby,

restricted to the top end of the market. Shellys, the high-street fashion shoe store, sees its mission as making chic footwear accessible to all. Indeed, purchasing a pair of Shellys shoes is something of a rite of passage. In London the company sells about 30,000 pairs every week, and on a Saturday the méele at the Regent Street branch is enough to bring on a claustrophobic attack as people buy a new pair for the big night out.

A team of in-house designers produces everything from loafers through mules to kitten heels and boots, in every style from Tank Girl to drop-dead trendy knee-high, mock-croc square-toed.



Loafers are a fashion classic that look good with any outfit

Shoes are the new clothes. That may sound daft, but along the lines of Diana Vreeland's immortal observation about pink being the navy blue of India, there is a certain logic to it. Shoes, it seems, are what people are buying instead of clothes.

Patrick Cox, the Chelsea-based wunderkind shoe designer, who helped to popularise the mock snake-skin loafer, explains: "I think fashion has become somewhat irrelevant. We do Seventies, then we do Sixties and then suddenly we do Seventies again. People are changing and updating their wardrobes with accessories. Bags and shoes have come to the forefront of people's minds."

What tends to come to the forefront of the mind when talk turns to shoes is Imelda Marcos, former first lady of the Philippines, and Cox admits that there "is always a hard core of women who will buy 20 pairs a season, and not just from me but from everyone else as well". Nevertheless, he insists that the popularity of shoes is moving out of this exotic ghetto.

"Bernie" Cline and Horne, fashion director of *Harpers & Queen*, concurs. "People now wear what they feel comfortable with, but accessories are what keep the outfits in fashion."

but again terribly feminine. For floppy clothes I would wear satin, strappy slingbacks, and for the long, sculpted silhouette it is grain or black satin," she says.

Ms Taylor has a choice of at least four pairs of day shoes to accompany an outfit, and believes that it is impossible to have too many evening shoes.

If Flo Torrrens of Russell

It's official: fashion is where the feet are

Forget about keeping up with the latest clothes and follow in Imelda Marcos's footsteps: shoes are where it's at, says Nick Foulkes



Preparations for a Paris fashion collection get under way

and Bromley is to be believed, Ms Taylor is a typical, albeit slightly exaggerated example of the new shoe consumer. "People are much more precise about what they want. It used to be a case of buying any old court shoe, but now it is vital to have just the right pair," she says emphatically. "It is easier to make do with last season's clothes than it is with shoes. You can't cheat on shoes."

Nor is it merely women who are becoming more demanding when it comes to being shod. Eric Cook, who has worked for Lobb, Maxwell and New & Lingwood, recently set up his own bespoke shoe-making business. "Because of the increase in the popularity of bespoke tailoring among younger men, I am now finding that they are expressing an interest in having bespoke, hand-crafted shoes. In London, the original West End shoemakers such as Lobb, New & Lingwood, Wildsmith and Fosters have been joined by newer names."

The cult of footwear is not

But perhaps the surest indicator that shoes are taking over from clothes is that just as fashion designers produce one eye-catching, if apparently uncomfortable or modestly-challenging, garment, so do shoe designers. *Vogue* recently printed a picture of a shoe which looked as though it had a masonry nail as a heel. Designed by Manolo Blahnik's sister Evangelina, it is certainly eye-catching (Linda Evangelista is said to have bought pairs in several colours). However, at £200 a pair, they are probably not quite the thing for a heavy night on the town.

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Britain must resist this court

Bruce Anderson on a ruling that threatens our liberty

Michael Howard was surprisingly plausible in defeat yesterday. The European Court of Human Rights had struck down an important element of British practice in dealing with juvenile murderers, but Mr Howard managed to sound both conciliatory and defiant. Politically, it was an impressive performance: sweet as the fudges of adversity. But it was no more than an evasion. Britain's adherence to the court is now causing fundamental problems. It is a threat to our democracy, our rule of law and our sovereignty.

None of this was foreseen when we helped to establish the European Convention of Human Rights in the early post-war years. In those days, we were adopting a missionary role. Throughout mainland Europe, the rule of law had been corrupted by fascism, dictatorship and occupation. We wanted to help our neighbours to rebuild their judicial institutions; it seemed only sensible to establish an external means of validation to help to assist them to do so. In those days, we had no idea that this nascent European court would ever cause us trouble. We had won our battles for legal rights in the late 17th and early 18th centuries. For 200 years, we had been an example to the rest of mankind. None of the British founding fathers of the court would have entertained the notion that foreigners had anything to teach us about the rule of law.

But the trouble with European institutions is that they are always protean. Even if you start them off in one form, they quickly adapt to another. The Court of Human Rights is not part of the EU, but its judges and officials have the same Euro-nomenclature mentality as those who run Brussels and Strasbourg. Like the EU they are hungry for jurisdiction and disdainful of the nation-state. Its aim is one law to bind all Europe.

The latest judgment has nothing to do with human rights. Until now, the Home Secretary had the power to prolong the detention of juvenile murderers if he believed that it was unsafe to release them. By ruling to the contrary, the court is meddling in politics. It is setting itself up as an unelected legislature with the power to over-rule our people and our Parliament. There is no redress for the ensuing grievances.

Some would claim that the same applies to the EU. But at least in that case, there are compensations; we make political concessions to win economic advantages. The price may sometimes be too high, but we have the opportunity to influence the EU's decision-making. Its policies may be alien and often repulsive, but at least we can play our hand.

We cannot do that in the Court of Human Rights, nor does one single advantage accrue from our membership. The Foreign Office has a counter-argument. It points out that the emergent democ-

racies of Central and Eastern Europe are now being enticed into the Convention. Their position is analogous to that of France and Germany in 1950: their civil society is so polluted that they require outside help to live according to civilised norms, but if Britain were now to withdraw, they might be deterred from joining.

But they are capable of grown-up assessments. There is no difficulty in explaining to Romanians, Slovaks or Latvians why they need the court while we do not: they understand the distinction, and most of them envy our superiority in the rule of law. So there is only one problem: our diplomats' embarrassment at any notion of British superiority.

One other solution to the question has been proposed, by Tony Blair and others: to incorporate the Convention into British domestic law. If we had a written constitution, it might seem preferable to frame it in our own forms and have it interpreted by our own judges. But a written constitution is not only inherently undemocratic, it is a threat to the integrity of the legal process.

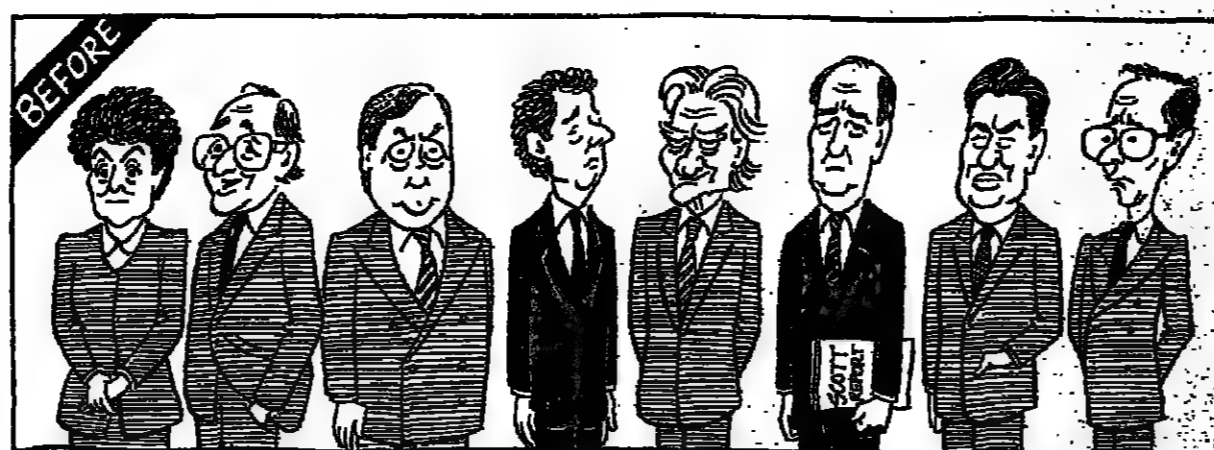
Almost all of those who want a written constitution wish to use the courts to rectify their democratic incompetence. Some Tories are attracted by the thought of entrenching fox-hunting and private education. Left-wingers see a hope of securing equality for homosexuals and a more lenient treatment of criminals.

Both sides would look to the judges to make laws which the democratic process would never accept.

The malign consequences of this are apparent in the recent history of the United States, where the Supreme Court has become a partisan — and unelected — legislature. As such it has contributed to the withdrawal of consent from the political process, and the weakening of American institutions. Party thanks to the Supreme Court, the fire under the melting-pot has gone out, leaving America at the mercy of bellicose minorities.

It is often alleged that Britain has no constitution. This is a gross error. Our constitution is as rich and complex as any history. It cannot be abstracted in documentary form, for it is nothing less than the way of life of a free people, expressed in institutions which are also free, albeit ancient, and bound together by the rule of law. To exchange this great heirloom of freedom for the arbitrary processes of a foreign court would be lunatic. To trade it for the governance of our own judges might be less absurd, but the consequences could be almost as damaging.

The Government's response to the encroachments of the Court of Human Rights has not been heroic. Ministers have lived from judgment to judgment. But eventually, the fundamentals will have to be tackled. We shall have to decide whether we are a democracy or a judgeocracy. The author is political columnist of The Spectator.



TWO FIGURES DOCTORED TO BE WHITER THAN WHITE

A merchant of fear

Some talk of Alexander, some cling to Dole, but Buchanan goes on winning

Only three men and the acceptance of two ideas now stand between Pat Buchanan and the White House. The three men are Bob Dole, Lamar Alexander and Bill Clinton. The two ideas are "America First" and "Social Conservatism". If he can beat these three men, and if the two ideas take fire with the American electorate, Pat Buchanan will be inaugurated as president in January 1997. Iowa showed that his total opposition to abortion has won the support of the religious right, a powerful group in the Republican Party.

In Iowa, Pat Buchanan ran a close second and forced Phil Gramm to withdraw; that left him as the only serious conservative candidate for the Republican nomination. In New Hampshire he ran first, and is now the candidate whom the others have to stop. Yet in New Hampshire the moderates won about 70 per cent of the vote in the Republican primaries, against about 30 per cent for Buchanan and Alan Keyes combined. If that split is maintained, Buchanan will not have enough delegates to win the nomination at San Diego in August, even if he wins the largest number of delegates for any one candidate. However, primary races are often decided by momentum, and Buchanan, after Iowa and New Hampshire, is the candidate with the "Big Mo".

The three men who stand between Buchanan and the White House are all vulnerable. Bob Dole lights no fires. He is over 70 and has been in Congress since 1960. His policy position in American politics is not unlike that of John Major in British: he is the leader of the non-ideological Right, of those conservatives who see politics as a practical, professional, compromise business, and are distrustful of ideas, those showy things which hang in your face like an exploding cigar.

Until the voting began Bob Dole was the frontrunner; as soon as voting started, he began to develop negative momentum, winning a smaller share of the Iowa vote than he had done in 1988, and then running second in New Hampshire. He still has money, organisation and the support of the Republican machine. If he can stay in the race, he may be able to do a deal with Lamar Alexander at the convention. Most Republicans doubt whether he could then beat Clinton in November.

Lamar Alexander is the man you

vote for if you think Bob Dole is too old and Pat Buchanan is too fascist. An Iowa friend of mine, who attended the local caucus, said that Alexander was "the nicest guy in the race". He has made a lot of money out of investment opportunities which may have arisen because he is a popular local politician in Tennessee. If you write down his policy positions, they are centrist as are Dole's, but he is much more comfortable than Dole with the now dominant generation of baby-boomers. His slogan is ABC — Alexander Beats Clinton — and he probably would have more chance of doing so than Dole. If Dole's campaign collapses, Dole delegates will certainly switch to Alexander to keep out Buchanan.

The weakness of Dole and Alexander is that both of them stand for politics as usual. They are moderate Republicans like George Bush. If either were elected president, the world would go on very much as before. The United States would remain a predictable power, operating on the consensus policies of the post-Reagan period. This might be a very good thing — certainly it is what all other governments would prefer — but it is not an exciting prospect, and may fail to satisfy the American electorate.

There is plenty of evidence that Americans want change. They voted for change in 1992 because they were bored with George Bush; they voted for change in 1994 because they were already bored with Bill Clinton, though they have not become very devoted to Newt Gingrich; they could again vote for change in 1996, though they might live to regret it.

Pat Buchanan is a populist: he speaks of his campaign in terms of a Peasants' Revolt; the Peasants' Revolt of 1381 is not generally regarded as a conservative event. "When Adam delved and Eve span, who was then a gentleman?" Buchanan claims to be bringing "working-class Americans back into the Republican Party" and has compared his supporters to "peasants with pitchforks". He is the War

tyler of America's white working-class, with all its prejudices and fears. This is where the great divide comes among those who call themselves conservatives in the Republican Party. It is partly a divide between working-class and middle-class Republicans. Many of my American friends are Adam Smith conservatives; their core values are those of Jeffersonian liberalism: they believe in a free, open, competitive society under law. Pat Buchanan is not that sort of conservative at all. He identifies with the losers in competition, with the middle-manager who has lost his job, with the automobile worker who believes he has a right to make cars for the American market, and the Japanese and Mexicans do not. He is hostile to the big corporations with their "downsizing" and their rising profits. Adam Smith conservatives believe in international competition: Pat Buchanan's constituency believes in national protection behind a slogan of "America First". It is indeed "the wrong kind of conservative", as he can be called a conservative at all. That should however alarm rather than encourage President Clinton.

Until the late and far from lamented Senator Joe McCarthy developed right-wing populism in the post-war Republican Party, populism was largely the trade of certain Democrats. In my childhood, a number of American politicians with names like Joe or Pat preached "America First" views to the working-class audience. Some of them were horrible, like Father Coughlin, the radio racist. Others were innocent old blue-eyed Irish pols whose lives revolved around the shady contract, the rosary, the whisky bottle and the wake. The most famous, and the most powerful, of these demagogues was not even Irish or Catholic: he was the Governor of Louisiana, Huey Long, whose slogan, "Every man a king", threatened even Franklin Roosevelt in the mid 1930s. Huey was only

stopped by being assassinated by an obstetrician in Baton Rouge.

If the Republicans do nominate Pat Buchanan, he will continue to target the religious Right, which might deliver him a majority in the South, and the threatened workers, who might deliver him a majority in the industrial states. Bill Clinton would pick up some countervailing votes in the suburbs. I have some Republican friends who say they would have to vote for Clinton, whom they totally distrust, rather than Buchanan, but these people all belong to the winners in the world of competition, not to the losers. If Pat Buchanan wins the peasants and Bill Clinton wins the peers, it is easy to see who will gain most votes. One has to remember that the "cognitive elite" of the information age is still a small minority.

The danger is that Pat Buchanan could create a new coalition of forces in American politics, as Franklin Roosevelt did in 1932, by allying depressed industrial workers with the poor white South: he would be doing it with isolationist policies, and as a Republican. Buchanan's difficulty is that he needs a recession, and he may not get one. The discontent exists, but is far from universal.

The early Republican primaries probably reflect the national arithmetic. The moderates win 70 per cent of the vote; the conservatives, playing on social and economic anxieties, win 30 per cent. At present most Americans still feel that they are doing quite well. They do not think that he has done too badly for them. Nor do they feel isolationist or in personal need of job protection. If this present mood continues, the Republicans are likely to nominate Dole or Alexander, and if they did nominate Buchanan he would probably lose. One of his weaknesses is that his attitudes repel many women, and that alone could stop him reaching the White House.

The Federal Reserve's official view is that the American economy is "basically on track for sustained growth". It could be wrong. But this optimism is supported by the latest advance indicators and by the broad money supply figures. If there is no recession, Buchanan will run out of the economic anxiety which makes people vote for him. He is a merchant of fear, and without fear he will not succeed. There was enough fear in New Hampshire to put him into first place. That cannot be good news for America.

William Rees-Mogg

Another fine mess

BARONESS Thatcher has been letting off steam about John Major over the Scott report. She has been telling friends that the Prime Minister should never have subjected his Government to the ghastly mess it has caused — she believes he should not have set up Sir Richard Scott's inquiry over the sale of arms to Iraq.

Much to the astonishment of fellow diners, she held forth on the subject the other day at an exclusive dinner party in London. "She didn't hold back," says one source. "It was full-blown Thatcher."

Yesterday, her office was less forthcoming about her dinner engagements. But although she had previously kept her views on Sir Richard's inquiry to herself, she proved a frosty interviewee for him and his elegant assistant Presley Baxendale during the proceedings.

● The BBC has been besieged by opera lovers, desperate for more revelations about the Royal Opera House, now that its gripping documentary series *The House* has finished. What they really want to know is in which box it was that an amorous young couple were

caught after complaints about the noise. After indefatigable research, I can reveal that those with romantic intentions should ask for box 38. And keep quiet.

Nose job

JARVIS COCKER, the androgynous lead singer of Pulp, vehemently denies knocking down children when he invaded the stage at the Brit awards. But he has

FISH & CHIPS



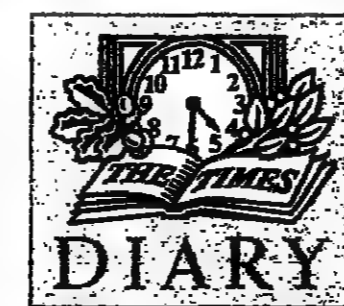
caused some damage in the past. A boyhood trip to Skegness sounds particularly violent.

"I knocked out this scrap man, who was courting me mother," he says in this month's *Arena* magazine. Insisting "I didn't mean to. We were playing crazy golf, and I don't see it on telly that you swing when you play golf... and he was stood behind me. I cracked him right on the top of the nose and knocked him out."

● *Feathers will be flying tonight outside Her Majesty's Theatre in London's Haymarket, where animal rights protesters will be picketing Phantom of the Opera. It's not so much the show they object to as Sir Andrew Lloyd Webber's plan to farm ostriches on his estate in Berkshire. "They are not farm animals, they are exotic ancient birds from Africa," squawks a picket. A couple of ostrich eggs lobbed from the balcony should settle it.*

Number one

JUST how close to the Almighty is Sir Edward Heath? The question was posed by guests at the former Prime Minister's lunch table at the former Salisbury home recently. The party included the Bishop of Salisbury, the Rt Rev David Stancliffe, and



the Archbishop of Westminster, Cardinal Basil Hume. So, who should say grace? The Bishop, in whose diocese they were dining, or His Eminence?

Sir Edward's solution was based on a precedent set in 1972 when he entertained the Archbishops of Westminster and Canterbury in Downing Street. There was consternation among staff over who should sit on the PM's right. "And then just before dinner they came running up to my room and asked who would say grace," says Heath. "I said I would."

Pink ladies

THE Princess of Wales appears to have been keeping her favourite designer, Catherine Walker, busy once more. Fashion pundits remarked on the powder pink outfit

she wore yesterday as she was whisked from Lahore airport — it was almost a replica of the blue shawlwar kameez that her hostess Jemima Khan waded around in at her evening wedding reception.

Jemima's blue outfit was a Catherine Walker number, but yesterday the shop would neither confirm nor deny kitting out the Princess for Pakistan. However, one or two designers were snuffy about the creation, pictured on our news pages. "It makes her look very busy," commented one.

New show

THE Royal Academy is branching out into theatre. It has commissioned a one-man show by the comedian John Sessions about the life of the Victorian painter Frederick Leighton next month.

Sessions will play all the Victorian characters himself, updating them to bring a populist air. Leighton will be portrayed as Hugh Grant Prince Albert as Arnold Schwarzenegger, Ruskin as Dirk Bogarde, and a heated artistic exchange between Gérardin and Delacroix will be conducted in the voices of two Italian-Americans Joe Pesci and Robert De Niro.

P-H-S



John Sessions with a statue by Frederick Leighton

An oily drop in the ocean

Nigel Hawkes

says the spill is not catastrophic

The fury of the sea mocks man's pretensions to have mastered nature. First it smashes an oil tanker on the rocks, then it laughs at our concern over the damage the leaking oil will do. To the ocean, both the tanker and the oil are trivial.

Thirty years of experience has taught that oil spills are never as bad as they seem. It is small consolation to people whose beaches are contaminated and to birds and other creatures injured or killed, but within a few months — unless we are very unlucky — the evidence of the spill should have largely disappeared.

Those of us who said this at the time of the Braer spill in the Shetlands three years ago held our breath, but only for a day or two. The sea swallowed the oil as easily as many swallow the environmentalists' propaganda, trotted out shamelessly each time a tanker goes aground. There is nothing like an oiled bird for getting to the parts of the brain that more mundane forms of fundraising cannot reach.

The *Sea Empress* contained a lot of oil, but even if all of it escapes, it will be only about half the volume lost from the *Amoco Cadiz*, which grounded off Brittany in 1978, and a small fraction of the million or so tons deliberately leaked by Saddam Hussein during the 1991 Gulf War. (By the summer of 1992, an American expedition to the Gulf could find few traces of this oil in the sea, although the beaches that it remained badly contaminated.)

The greatest danger during oil spills may be the overpowering urge to be seen to be doing something. Governments would face abuse if they said what is true, that nature is best left to look after itself. Salvage operations also have an interest in action, though it is the hope of profit rather than the fear of public disapprobation that motivates them.

Oil is natural, and has been seeping into the sea since time immemorial. Detergents, on the other hand, are the products of synthetic chemists, and no "natural" populations have evolved to take them apart. Much has been done to improve detergents since the Torrey Canyon disaster, when they certainly did shore harm than the oil, but even now there is little cause for spraying oil at sea unless it is heading for shore.

Left to its own devices, substantial amounts of the oil will evaporate, while some will sink to the seabed and be incorporated into sediments. Bacteria will break most of it up, and some attempts to enhance the process may be justified. In the Exxon Valdez spill in Alaska, pellets of fertiliser containing nitrogen, phosphorus and iron, speeded up the degradation of the oil threefold, without apparently injuring marine life.

Comparatively little is known about how these consortia of micro-organisms work. By 1992, the coast of the Gulf was covered with blue-green mats, each gram of which contained a million cells of bacteria capable of using crude oil as their sole form of energy. The mats were formed by another type of bacterium, which both provided the oil-gobblers with the oxygen they need, and held them together so that they were not swept out to sea. Man could never have designed so neat a system.

In Nigeria, studies have shown that fungi too play a part, and that the population of microbes alters as it tackles first the light and then the heavy fractions of the crude. Anything that damages these bacterial populations — including detergent or even hot water (which was used to wash the Alaskan rocks after Exxon Valdez) is hindering not helping.

That is all very well in the long term. But what about the birds and fish now being poisoned by the oil? Natural populations of most species, including birds, follow a roller-coaster pattern determined by weather and the availability of food. A spill even as large as this one is relatively insignificant when set against this background. Only if the bird is rare or the species at risk would an oil spill be catastrophic.

This is not, of course, to argue that oil spills don't matter. They are a tremendous waste of time, energy and material, although they contribute in total only about a fifth of the oil that reaches the sea: far more is poured down the drains by careless motorists doing their own servicing.

Much better if oil tankers never grounded on rocks, but that is asking the impossible. Occasional spills are the price we pay for a worldwide trade out of which Britain has profited greatly, especially since the discovery of North Sea oil.

The paradox is that the environmentalists who criticise modern society for its domination over nature are making the same error themselves, by implying that our accidents are capable of destroying it. The evidence is that great oceans can absorb tremendous punishment without showing any perceptible effects — think of the millions of tons of dangerous cargoes sunk in the north Atlantic during the Second World War, never to be seen or heard of again.

The effects of the *Sea Empress* are likely to be local, short-lived, and far less catastrophic than we are being asked to believe. It is a great pity the tanker grounded, but it is not the end of the world.

TRANBOU RG

BOOKS, BILLS &...



STRASBOURG'S SHADOW

Politicians have a part to play in setting sentences

The European Court of Human Rights has not endeared itself to British popular opinion. Last year the Strasbourg judges ruled in favour of the relatives of three IRA terrorists killed while on active service in Gibraltar. Yesterday it concluded that the powers of the Home Secretary to keep juvenile killers in prison should be curtailed.

The rule of law certainly requires a limit on the executive's intervention in administering justice. But if respect for the criminal justice system is not to fray further than it has already, then judges, especially foreign ones, should recognise that elected politicians have a role in reflecting popular concerns in the most sensitive cases.

Familiar voices, those inclined to foam whenever "Europe" intervenes in the affairs of these islands, have pressed again for the government to remove Britain from the ECHR's pale. But it would be wrong for the UK to stage a curiously one-sided retreat when the people of the fledgling democracies of Eastern Europe are being brought within the court's protection. That does not mean that its every judgment is a cause for satisfaction. Yesterday's decision may not, in practice, have the dramatic effect some critics fear but its implications are not welcome.

The Strasbourg judgment does not undermine the Home Secretary's capacity to set the minimum sentence in murder cases. The killers of Jamie Bulger were initially imprisoned for a minimum of eight years. The Home Secretary subsequently insisted it should be at least fifteen. His power to do the same in any future case is, still, unaffected. That power is, however, due to be reviewed by the ECHR in the future in a case brought on behalf of Bulger's killers.

Yesterday's ECHR ruling relates to the notion of indefinite detention, "at Her Majesty's pleasure". At present the Home Secretary can keep juvenile offenders in

prison after the tariff has expired, until he is satisfied they are no longer a danger to the public. His decision is guided by the Parole Board but ultimate discretion rests with him, subject to judicial review. The ECHR argues this power should go and holds that detention should be a matter for the courts not the executive.

In general, it is right that sentencing should be a matter for the courts, and the British sense of liberty is disturbed by the idea of incarceration being decided by politicians. But there are exceptions, and it is important they be maintained. When capital punishment was abolished the state relinquished a power to maintain order which still enjoyed widespread popular support. At the time parliament made a compact with the people: the Home Secretary would retain the power to fix a basement for sentences in certain capital crimes.

Politicians, responsive to the concerns of an electorate who demand, and deserve, retribution for uniquely heinous crimes can act as the guardians of popular feeling when determining punishment. The maintenance of public faith in criminal justice, and the durability of the rule of law, depends on the occasional intervention of those elected to represent popular concerns.

It would, for that reason, be preferable to see the Home Secretary decide when children who have killed are fit to be freed. It is in just such sensitive cases that politicians should act as protectors of the public interest. But, even more than maintaining discretion on eventual release, it is desirable that the Home Secretary's power to set the minimum sentence should be preserved. It is vital the European Court does not use the case brought by Bulger's killers to remove the right to set the tariff. Justice would be ill-served if judges were to break the bond of trust between politicians and people that underpins the British legal system.

DOLE DOWN

New Hampshire has wounded, not anointed

The New Hampshire primary has traditionally created a front-running candidate at the head of a much reduced pack. In 1996 it has failed to fulfil that role. There is only one piece of new information which the Iowa caucuses had not already presented: that Steve Forbes's "flat tax" candidature is of no substance. Although Forbes may attempt to stay in the race for another two weeks, there must be limits to his willingness to fritter away his family fortune. Otherwise New Hampshire has simply reordered what Iowa passed on. Only three candidates can now fight with any credibility — Pat Buchanan, Bill Dole, and Lamar Alexander.

Mr Buchanan's success is striking. With very limited funding he has upset the might of the Republican establishment and enjoyed himself immensely in the process. He remains highly unlikely to be the Republican nominee. As the contest moves to larger states grouped in regional bunches, television advertising will become crucial. Mr Buchanan does not possess the resources to fight over such a wide terrain and is unlikely to acquire them. Press coverage of his past statements and present policies will be intense and unfriendly. In mainstream candidates such as Steve Forbes and Richard Lugar disappear, they and their supporters will not turn to Mr Buchanan.

Instead of anointing a front-runner, New Hampshire has instead wounded one. Although he continues to possess financial and organisational advantages, Senator Dole's unimpressive performance in the first two outings means that his candidature no longer retains its aura of inevitability. In effect there is no front-runner left for the Republican nomination. Mr Alexander has a real chance to become one, but to do so he needs an outright triumph in at least one of the five contests — Delaware, Arizona,

North Dakota, South Dakota and South Carolina — spread over the next ten days. If Mr Alexander can demonstrate the ability to win, then the consequence of Mr Buchanan's ultra-conservative strength would be to produce a moderate as the final victor.

Both Senator Dole and Mr Alexander, however, need to reflect on why Mr Buchanan has performed so well. In essence it is because he alone has articulated a message and offered precise (if rather peculiar and unconvincing) policies. The Dole campaign has milked the themes of character and experience for all they are worth. These are fine virtues but not enough in themselves. Americans need to know where the Senator stands. To what extent is he a convert to the Gingrich agenda outlined in the "Contract with America"? Is he now the best hope of those favouring pro-growth, anti-tax measures, or is he still, in Mr Gingrich's cutting words of a decade ago, "the tax-collector for the welfare state"?

As for Mr Alexander, he is against Washington and for the states. He also claims to be best placed to defeat Bill Clinton in November. Beyond that he is best known for his taste in music and shirts. To realise his potential he must start mixing more firm positions among his campaign themes.

If the two moderates fail to develop their message, then Pat Buchanan will be a force in this election for longer than many suspect. Even in eventual failure, he could succeed in moving the Republican agenda towards a fatal outcome for the final standard-bearer, Bill Clinton's record in office has hardly been so stellar as to deserve a second term without severe cross-examination. America is entitled to a proper battle. Unless Senator Dole and Mr Alexander find positive reasons to back their election bids, the final nomination will prove a dubious prize.

BOOKS, BITS AND BUNGLES

The Great British Library Disaster (continued)

It can be only a matter of time before someone writes a book chronicling the foul-ups and farce which have turned the building of the British Library at St Pancras into a thirty years' war between readers, librarians and the Department of National Heritage. In April, as we report today, the National Audit Office will publish fresh criticism to add to the appalling catalogue that awaits the historians.

The well-known fiascos — 2,000 miles of faulty cabling, 5,000 dud sprinkler heads, an aborted computer system and years of delay — were mainly avoidable. The NAO concludes. The library's shelves will already be full to capacity by the time it opens. Attempts to discover who is to blame for this daisy chain of bangles never succeed. To be turned into a Hollywood disaster movie, the story would require the scriptwriters to add only a romance or two and a happy ending.

Meanwhile, over a period similar to that needed to construct a medieval cathedral, the idea of a library as a piece of monumental architecture has become less important. In societies where words can be stored and moved as electronic bits, a library of books will soon come to be only one part of a written heritage. The balance of the library's task shifts away from acquisition and preservation towards helping readers find their way through the anarchy of the internet. Karl Marx, had he lived now,

might never have had to visit the Bloomsbury reading room. He could have researched *Das Kapital* on-line.

Books, in one literary critic's happy phrase, are "funny little portable pieces of thought". A copyright library amasses the experience condensed into books and, by degrees becomes society's memory. Adapting to the electronic revolution while preserving the legacy of the past requires a programme to rescue books which have already deteriorated and a capacity to absorb the output of electronic publishers. A million-and-a-half of the library's 18 million books are thought to need repair. No law yet obliges electronic publishers to deposit with any library. Should some part of the existing book collection be put on to disc? But at what speed and on which software? Almost every available system will be obsolete long before readers have lost interest in the material. The Library must try to preserve a service defined by the British Museum Act of 1753 as for "Public use to all Posterity".

The librarians must simultaneously act against the mice nibbling in the Bloomsbury stacks and keep pace with the rolling computer revolution in access to the written word. The British Library's planners are aware of these issues but their time, energy and money have been distracted for decades by the enervating struggle over St Pancras. Not only money has been wasted.

Scott: a Falklands parallel denied

From Lord Carrington, CH

Sir, Since the publication of the Scott report there has been much talk of the resignation of the ministers involved, and in this context my name has been mentioned.

I see no parallel between the invasion of the Falkland Islands and the arms for Iraq inquiry. The assessment made by the Foreign Office of the likelihood of an Argentinian invasion of the Falklands was wrong and I, as Foreign Secretary, properly took responsibility and resigned.

Mr Waldegrave was neither in charge of the Department nor was the policy at fault. In his and his colleagues' judgment, the guidelines on the export of arms to Iraq were not changed. Scott himself accepts that that was their judgment at the time, and that it was honestly held.

Parliament was informed that "the guidelines on the export of defence equipment to Iran and Iraq are kept under constant review and are applied in the light of prevailing circumstances including the ceasefire". No weapons were ever exported.

Mr Waldegrave and Sir Nicholas Lyell are two of the most honourable men in public life. If either of them felt that they had acted in any way improperly, they would at once have handed in their resignations to the Prime Minister. In my view, they are right not to have done so.

Yours faithfully,
CARRINGTON,
32a Ovington Square, SW3.
February 20.

Labour and pensions

From the Secretary of State for Social Security

Sir, In your recent letter ("Lilley's logic", February 8) you reported my criticisms of Labour's proposed "guaranteed minimum pension". Such a guarantee would be a powerful disincentive to save — since people would lose up to a pound of the guaranteed pension for every pound of private pension.

In his letter to you today Chris Smith, MP, writes that "Labour has not made a commitment to a guaranteed minimum pension". This contradicts Tony Blair's declaration at the 1995 Labour Party conference that "we are looking at ways... to guarantee a minimum standard of living for our pensioners. The aim of the policy is to... guarantee a minimum income that provides dignity in old age".

In the House of Commons yesterday, I challenged Chris Smith to explain this contradiction. He replied, "pensions and incomes are different". Some people might describe this distinction as sophistry. No doubt Chris Smith had no duplicitous intent. But his letter was certainly apt to mislead.

Yours faithfully,
PETER LILLEY,
Department of Social Security,
Richmond House,
79 Whitehall, SW1.
February 21.

Foetal pain

From Mr Dickinson B. Cowan, FRCCO

Sir, The article by Jeremy Laurance, "A new anesthetic baby feel pain?" (Body and Mind, February 13), raises issues which have been largely ignored by doctors, midwives and many women.

What is the foetal perception of labour? Is it painful? If so, does this matter? Is the perception of pain by the foetus a necessary requirement? Does the perception of pain have consequences after birth?

These are not easy questions, but when choices are made about analgesia in labour the need for foetal analgesia is not considered.

The epidural is commonly chosen because it does not get through to the foetus, but perhaps there is foetal advantage with an analgesia such as Pethidine, which does cross the placenta.

Yours sincerely,
DICKINSON COWAN
(Consultant obstetrician),
The Portland Hospital,
235-209 Great Portland Street, W1.
February 14.

Farrant case

From His Honour Judge Peter Smith

Sir, Mr Peter Doyle (letter, February 17) asks how, if caught, Victor Farrant might have a fair trial if his jury knows him to have a previous conviction for rape.

Most people might wonder how his trial could be fair if the jury trying him erroneously assumed him not to have such a previous conviction.

Surely it is time for modern juries to be trusted with fuller information about the person they are trying? Presently they are told of an accused person's good character, if he has one, and how such a fact goes to his credibility and lack of propensity to commit the crime charged, but, in the vast majority of cases, they are not trusted with knowledge of the defendant's previous convictions.

Yours sincerely,
PETER SMITH,
c/o Manchester Crown Court,
Crown Square, Manchester.
February 17.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

1 Peanington Street, London E1 9XN Telephone 0171-782 5000

A time for talk, not blame, to break the Irish deadlock

From Professor Karl Mackie

Sir, I hesitate to read where UK and Irish diplomats have regularly fallen into the mire, but I wonder when the British and Irish Governments will show more imagination on the appointment of an effective mediator.

It is long overdue. Senator Mitchell's terms of reference were partial and open to instant dispute on publication despite an admirable attempt at defusing the situation. A genuine mediator role would have contained the flexibility to allow dialogue to continue for a longer period towards perhaps more fruitful results.

The examples are already there — Richard Holbrooke in Bosnia, the Norwegians Terje Larsen and Mona Juul in the Middle East. John Hume of SDLP as a peace broker stands out for his courage. However, he lacks, along with other less public mediators working in Ireland, the qualities introduced by a mediator with no history or interest in the subject-matter in dispute.

The two governments have a similar problem. Neutral mediation is not a universal panacea but at least it offers an extra dimension to one dimensional conflict.

Yours sincerely,
KARL MACKIE
(Chief Executive),
Centre for Dispute Resolution,
7 St Katharine's Way, E1.
February 20.

From Ms Hilary Bradt

Sir, The absence of war is like the absence of pain: too easily disregarded until it recurs. As Libby Purves said with her usual eloquence ("Silence the peace saboteurs", February 20), this is a time for talk, not a time for blame. But in order to talk we must end the deception that "our" side has done no wrong, historically or politically.

We must accept that some of the responsibility is ours, and therefore that concessions must be made. At the beginning of the ceasefire, for instance,

could not the Government have apologised for Bloody Sunday as the first step towards negotiations and a permanent ceasefire?

Yours sincerely,
HILARY BRADT,
Grey House (Flat),
Beeches Drive, Farnham Common,
Buckinghamshire,
February 20.

From Mr Anselm Kuhn

Sir, Libby Purves is unfairly hard on David Frost who asked Gerry Adams whether he would urge people to "grass" on suspect bombers.

On the contrary, we need more such simple and direct questions which — at soundbite level — deny republican spokesmen the opportunity for wriggling, equivocation and weasel words and clearly expose them and the views they hold.

Yours sincerely,
ANSELM KUHN,
105 Whitney Drive,
Stevenage, Hertfordshire,
February 20.

From Professor J. Heywood

Sir, Simon Jenkins ("When big is ugly", February 14) writes of "the steady recovery by [Northern Ireland] of its economic and political self-confidence" and the need to restore local democracy for "what else has all the international diplomacy been about but finding a way of getting Protestant and Catholic to share in the running of local hospitals, parks and housing estates". This, he argues, is what hundreds of local councillors are doing already. What is wanted is a substantial strengthening of local democracy, not the "big solution".

Last week the force of his argument was powerfully demonstrated to me. In Liverpool, I saw an Anglican bishop clapped at mass in the Catholic cathedral, and on the following day at the funeral mass for Archbishop Worlock, a non-conformist minister read

the prayers at the offertory, including the Hail Mary.

The churches and people of Liverpool have demonstrated most powerfully what can be achieved at community level. This is surely what should be encouraged in Northern Ireland where SDLP, Sinn Féin and Ulster Unionist councillors are already working together toward the peaceful management of their communities.

Yours faithfully,
JOHN HEYWOOD,
University of Dublin,
3133 Arts Building,
Trinity College, Dublin 2.

From Mr Andrew Simpson

Sir, Let's suppose that the Irish invaded Britain in 1714AD, and occupied our beautiful land for the best part of 800 years. I imagine we British would have looked on "resistance" as a sacred duty, and would have bombed and murdered with gusto; and would have scoffed at the occupying power's attempt to brand us as "terrorists".

Let's suppose that, in response to our spirited resistance, the Irish imperialists finally decided to withdraw from Britain in about 1920, with the exception of Lancashire. Lancashire is Irish, they would perhaps have said: the majority of the people living in Lancashire are Irish (we know because we put them there), and they say Lancashire is Irish, so it's Irish. I imagine that our British response would have been to continue resisting (bombs and all) until Lancashire was given back.

In my view we British are under a moral obligation to return Northern Ireland to the Irish nation, and we need not be surprised if "the armed struggle" continues until we do so.

Yours sincerely,
ANDREW SIMPSON,
4 Bromsgrove, Pewsey, Wiltshire,
February 20.

Business letters, page 27

Doctors lured from the Third World to prop up NHS

From Dr Alan B. Shrank

Sir, Professor Sir Raymond Hoffenberg (letter, February 15) complains, on behalf of his native land, that NHS trusts are luring South African doctors to work here at the expense of their own health service. He is right to do so. However, the corollary to this fact — that the UK is no longer self-supporting in medical graduates — is equally deplorable.

The NHS reforms of the past six years have overburdened doctors with paperwork at the expense of clinical care and lay managers try to dictate the clinical priorities, often for commercial reasons. As a result, working in the NHS has become so unattractive that, according to my calculations, some 40 per cent of medical students eventually do not want to work in NHS general practice or hospital practice. Salaries may not be the issue, but the latest review body pay award does nothing either to persuade young doctors to work in the NHS or to dissuade senior doctors from taking early retirement.

We have always provided postgraduate education for foreign doctors, but now over 30 per cent of doctors in training in NHS hospitals are non-EU citizens. They can only stay here for four years, so they will not become either NHS consultants or general practitioners. With large numbers of senior doctors taking early retirement the scarcity of highly qualified doctors will lead to a serious decline in the standards of care provided by the NHS.

The Home Office has recently withdrawn the need for work permits for doctors who are not EC citizens, thus depriving other countries of their much-needed doctors whose training they have funded. We should be deeply

ashamed that, because we have made our NHS so unattractive to our own medical graduates, poorer countries are being bled of their own doctors.

Yours sincerely,
ALAN B. SHRANK
(Vice-President, Hospital Consultants and Specialists Association),
20 Crescent Place, Town Walls,
Shrewsbury, Shropshire,
February 16.

From Professor Eldryd Parry

Sir, Sir Raymond Hoffenberg's letter could have been written from many Anglophone countries of sub-Saharan Africa which for years have been unable to pay competitive salaries, and thus have lost skilled professionals to other countries and to international agencies within and outside Africa.

Indeed, since the end of apartheid, some of this loss has been to South Africa itself, and it would be interesting to know whether the recruitment of medical officers from Cuba, mentioned by Sir Raymond, is for posts in the excellent urban centres or for the formerly neglected rural areas. Few doctors trained in a modern hospital in a major city want to go to a remote rural area: most are trained in modern and technically advanced medicine by highly skilled professionals who become their role models.

The problems that arise from the loss of professionals can be alleviated if medical students in developing countries are equipped with skills which they can apply confidently in a rural posting, if a system of continuing education for professionally isolated doctors can be developed and if schools and reasonable common services can be provided in rural areas. The Tropical Health and Education

Trust has been working since 1989 with a number of medical schools in sub-Saharan Africa to meet some of these objectives. It is also actively engaged with the Ministry of Health in Uganda in a pioneer programme of continuing education for medical officers and medical assistants in rural hospitals and hopes to make this a model for other African countries.

Yours sincerely,
ELDRYD PARRY
(Chairman),
The Tropical Health and Education Trust,
1 Park Square West, NW1,
February 16.

From Dr Asoka Thenabadu

Sir, I am surprised the complaint by Sir Raymond Hoffenberg, a recent president of the Royal College of Physicians, that the NHS is "poaching" doctors from his native South Africa, should be confined to that country.

The National Health Service has traditionally depended on doctors from many Third World countries to fill their middle-grade posts, and most of these countries have lost a large percentage of their doctors to Britain over the last 40 years.

Surely Sir Raymond, when he was President of the Royal College, could have used his influence to shape medical education and training in the UK in such a way that the NHS did not need to "poach" from anywhere in the developing world.

Yours sincerely,
ASOKA THENABADU
(Managing Director),
Star Locums Medical Agency,
29 Longdown Lane North,
Epsom, Surrey,
February 15.

Restaurant tips

From Mr Bryan Cassidy, MEP for Dorset and Devon East (European People's Party Parliamentary Group (Conservative))

Sir, Bernard Levin's article "Why you never tip an equal" (February 17) quoted a number of London restaurants which now add a 12.5 per cent service charge to the bill. But there is another aspect to which he might wish to turn his attention — the rip-off of charging service on the total bill including VAT.

A trendy eatery in St James's added an "optional" service of 12.5 per cent to my bill recently on top of the 17.5 per cent VAT. So the total service worked out at nearly 15 per cent (14.6 per cent) not 12.5 per cent.

If service charges are to be added to restaurant bills, they should be calculated on the price of the meal without VAT.

Yours faithfully,

BRYAN CASSIDY,
11 Esmond Court,
Thackray Street, W8.

From Mr David Aylwin

Sir, The word "tip" was, I believe, originally an acronym for "to insure promptness". In the coffee houses of Dr Johnson's day, customers would negotiate a tip before ordering. If they received the service they had requested — such as to be out within 60 minutes — they gave the agreed amount; if not, they didn't.

With the trend to performance measures today, perhaps the climate is right for a return to such a system — say, £1 per smile and £5 for every conversation left uninterrupted.

Yours truly,
DAVID AYLWIN,
Blueberry Cottage, Mount Road,
Philpot Lane, Chobham, Surrey,
February 17.

From Major F. N. L. Chapman

Sir, I read with a degree of scepticism Bernard Levin's article. An official with whom I served in the Indian Army also never tipped "on principle".

He was condescending to waiters, postmen, dustmen, shop assistants and carol singers. His principle of not tipping must have been meanness for he deprived the underpaid of that little extra income which can make life easier.

I shall certainly continue to tip those who serve cheerfully and well until they are paid an "equal" salary, especially if Bernard Levin can adequately define what an "equal" is.

Yours faithfully,
FRANK L. CHAPMAN,
The Old Surgery, Gloucester Street,
Painswick, Gloucestershire,
February 19.

Letters should carry a daytime telephone number. They may be faxed to 0171-782-5046.

Mothering Sunday

From Mrs Susan M. Barnard

Sir, With regard to the report about Mothering Sunday (February 20). According to Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable (14th Edition) the flowers traditionally presented on this day are neither daffodils nor chrysanthemums but violets.

Yours faithfully,
SUSAN M. BARNARD,
4 Egerton Drive, Hale,
Altrincham, Cheshire.

Entre nous

From Dr Richard Cooper

Sir, Your readers will have been following keenly the French counter-attack against the assaults of *franglais*. Friday's copy of *Liberation* reveals the guardians of Gallic culture, weary of *les gags* of the Anglo-Saxons, redoubling their efforts (*c'est le rush*), putting the latest technical kit to work, including *le on line*, *le joystick* and even *une page de Web*, to ensure a better *chiffre marketing* (targeting) and a clear split between the languages, with the happy result that *le boom* is finally over and that foreign encroachments "*restant scotchés dans les starting-blocks*".

Please believe in the expression of my distinguished salutations.
RICHARD COOPER,
Brasenose College, Oxford.

OBITUARIES

BRENDA BRUCE

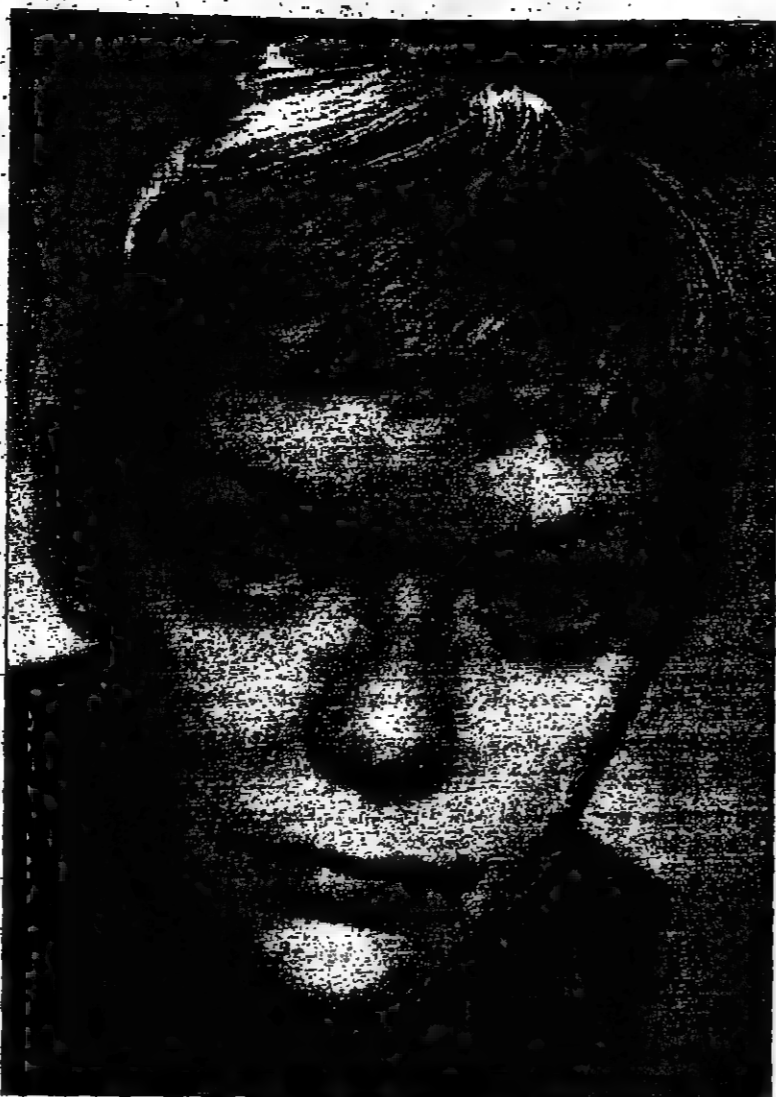
Brenda Bruce, OBE, actress, died on February 19 aged 76. She was born on July 7, 1919

THE *Evening Standard* once ran a bizarre competition. "Is this the plainest face on the English stage?" it asked, passing the inquiry over a photograph of the actress Brenda Bruce. A future of response was raised from readers. Though Bruce could never be termed beautiful in a conventional sense — she herself described her looks as "perky" — her tilted upper lip and strong slanting blue eyes gave her face a character and distinction which captivated audiences. She earned a reputation as "the best undamed actress of her generation" and in 1984 she was appointed OBE.

Throughout her life Bruce proved herself capable of turning the tables on fate and triumphing over the odds. Her personal life was scarred by tragedy. Her first husband died of cancer, her second of leukaemia, her son died before he reached his teens. Bruce, bravely resilient, coped with private grief by launching herself into her work. She was enormously adaptable and in the course of a career in which she moved from chorus girl to classical actress, she showed an astonishing breadth of performance both in the theatre and on the television screen. She was able to move from roles in the Royal Shakespeare Company with which she was long affiliated to such experimental parts as Winnie in Samuel Beckett's *Happy Days* in which she spent two hours interred in a mound of earth — "buried up to her dummies in the bleeding ground" as Beckett put it — able to do little else but talk.

Brenda Bruce started acting very young. By the age of three she had already informed her mother that she was going to be a fairy, and much of her childhood, she was later to recall, was spent tottering up and down corridors in high heeled shoes imagining she was Marlene Dietrich. She went to ballet lessons, though she declared herself hopeless, and relentlessly participated in recital and dancing competitions. By the age of 12 she had won a place in the chorus line in a production of *1066 And All That* at London's Strand Theatre. Her life became a crisscross of ballet lessons in the mornings, school lessons in the afternoons, and evening high kicks in the Strand.

Bruce was already a seasoned performer by 1936 when she was spotted by Barry Jackson, the grand old man of the Birmingham Repertory Com-



pany. Abandoning musicals along with the fragments of an unpromising academic career, she fled to Birmingham for three years.

Returning to London during the war she acted a number of roles but enjoyed her first major success at the Lyric, Hammersmith, in 1947 playing Eliza in *Pygmalion*. Shaw became a theme in her life when she went on to appear in the entire canon of his one-act plays at the Aldwych. These were directed by her husband Roy Rich whom she had married in 1946 and who was later to become head of Southern Television and the BBC Light Entertainment. During the 1950s the two of them presented their own television chat-show *Rich and Rich*.

filmed in a studio replica of their Bloomsbury flat. Bruce also wrote a weekly column based on events surrounding the upbringing of her adopted twin girls, and later her son, and though she continued at the same time to act in the theatre, it was because of her children that she gradually began to withdraw from the theatre and its grueling hours to take up more television work. In 1962 she was nominated Television Actress of the Year having starred in nine productions including *Girl in a Birdcage*, *The Stepfather*, *A Lily in Little India* and *Winter's Tale*.

It was only in 1964 that Bruce joined the RSC, from then on excelling in a number of roles from her first decisive success as Elizabeth Spriggs in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, a part to which she brought all her spirited sense of humour, to her fine portrayal of the fierce, guilt-racked Queen Gertrude in *Hamlet*. In 1968 she and her husband moved to a village near Stratford intending to run a "little pub" — in reality an 11-room hotel with restaurant attached. As indomitable in life as she was in her performances, Bruce would find herself lighting morning fires and cooking dinner for the guests when the chef disappeared, before and after her theatre performances. Often she would take her young son, Sam, to work with her, bathing him at the theatre and putting him to bed in her dressing room, before finally logging him home after the final curtain. She also became a "company man", the warm enthusiasm and self-effacement of this lively woman with her distinctive mop of red hair making her a highly sought after friend and confidante among her fellow actors.

However, alongside Bruce's professional success with the RSC ran her first private tragedy. Roy Rich died of cancer. It was only by immersing herself in a full season's schedule of work at the theatre that she managed to keep herself from despair as she struggled to continue running the hotel and look after her children. "One copes," she said. "I don't know what I would have done if I were just a housewife."

In 1970 she married a second time a fellow RSC actor Clem McCallin whom she had known since she was 14. But fate struck a second and then a third cruel blow when soon afterwards her young son died and her husband was diagnosed with leukaemia. Clem McCallin died in 1977.

Bruce's suffering gave her a tremendous vulnerability on stage and in 1987 when she played in a double bill of Arnold Wesker's *Yardsale* and *What-over Happened to Betty Lemon* — both portraits of abandoned women — she counterpointed unflinching veracity with sensitivity and tenderness.

Her last performance was at the Dorset Warehouse in 1993 where she played a lonely widow. She had also recently filmed D.H. Lawrence's *The Widowing of Mrs Holroyd* for the BBC.

In her later years Bruce worked with unostentatious commitment for both Asthma Research and Amnesty International.

Brenda Bruce is survived by her adopted twin daughters.

TORU TAKEMITSU

Toru Takemitsu, Japanese composer, died from cancer on February 20 aged 65. He was born in Tokyo on October 8, 1930.

FOR more than three decades Toru Takemitsu was the leader of a new music in Japan; he was also the first Asian composer to have his works regularly performed in Europe and America. These two aspects of his reputation involved something of a paradox. Where to the Japanese he represented modernity and a faultless command of Western resources, Westerners were more inclined to value the Japanese sensibility revealed in the compasses of his scores and in his fine awareness of natural sound, form, space and balance.

His own feeling, as revealed in his music and in verbal comments, seems to have been that his tradition of choice was French, and in many of his later works he paid homage to Debussy and Messiaen. Besides producing a large quantity of concert music, he wrote the scores for more than eighty Japanese films, including Kurosawa's *Ran* (1985).

He had little musical education. A month after he was born his family moved to China, and by the time they returned to Japan, when he was seven, Western culture was severely out of favour. That made it, to a boy, so much the more glamorous.

He recalled how a wartime propaganda film, showing the sinking of the *Prince of Wales*, had the contrary effect of impressing him with the magnificence of the West; another abiding memory was of a Josephine Baker record he heard as a young conscript, having been called up immediately after he had left school. With his vocation found, he began lessons in 1948 with Yasuji Kiyose, one of the outstanding Japanese composers of the previous generation.

In December 1950 he had his first public performance when his piano piece *Lento* for Two was played. The next year he was a founder member of a new group, the Jikken Kōbō (Experimental Workshop).

Soon after this he discovered Messiaen's music, but he was also learning from Schoenberg, Berg and Webern, and exploring new media. His *Vocalism A.J.* (1956), based on recordings of two actors pronouncing those vowels, was one of the first electronic pieces to be made in



Japan. Then came his first larger score, *Requiem* for strings (1957), dedicated to the memory of the composer Fumio Hayasaka. The story goes that Stravinsky, on a visit to Japan in 1959, was impressed by a recording of this work.

During the early 1960s his music began to be performed abroad, and at the same time his resources widened in response to what he was learning from American and European contemporaries, especially Cage and Boulez. A number of important scores resulted, including *Piano Distance* for solo piano (1961), *Ring* for flute, guitar and lute (1961) and *Art* for piano and orchestra (1963). All this while he had been writing exclusively for Western instruments, partly from a sense of shame in his feelings for his own country.

In 1964, however, he was struck again by the power of bunraku, the Japanese tradition of puppet opera, and during the next decade he composed several works involving Japanese instruments. *November Steps* (1967), a concerto for biwa and shakuhachi (lute and bamboo flute) with western orchestra, enjoyed particular success: it was first

performed by the New York Philharmonic, with Leonard Bernstein conducting, and was recorded by Bernard Haitink. Aaron Copland also did important work at this time in promoting his music.

His two discoveries of the 1960s — the Western avant garde and ancient Japan — gradually moved into the background, and he returned to his old loves, Debussy and Messiaen, in an abundant output of orchestral, chamber and solo instrumental pieces: he wrote very little for voices.

Many of his orchestral works are concertos, and often they have evocative titles: *A Bouquet of Songs* (1975, with solo marimba), *To the Edge of Dream* (1983, with solo guitar), *I hear the water dreaming* (1987, with solo flute), *A String around Autumn* (1989, with solo viola).

He was widely commissioned, and wrote two works for the London Sinfonietta: *Rain Spell* (1982) and *Tree Line* (1988). Audiences in many countries thus became familiar with his music, and — at the premieres he always attended — with its smiling, gentle, delicately featured and diminutive composer.

He is survived by his wife Asaka and their daughter.

SIMON DYER

Simon Dyer, CBE, Director General of the AA, died from cancer on February 17 aged 56. He was born on October 19, 1939.

SIMON DYER was Director General of the Automobile Association for the past nine years, during a period of healthy expansion for the association, but against a backdrop of recession in the motor industry as a whole. He was one of a new breed of businessmen at the top of the industry, whose performance was matched by a commensurately high salary. Dyer was earning a reported £300,000 in 1991, at a time when the chairman of Ford, Ian MacLaurin, was earning only half that amount.

But, by his credit, Dyer was not one of those freelance

heads of industry who was brought in from outside to turn a business round. He had joined the AA as a young man, worked in every department and was imbued with the association's philosophy.

The AA's profile increased substantially during his period in office. First, there were several successful advertising campaigns: in the late 1980s, two series, one featuring the "very nice men" of the AA, and another which introduced a new catchphrase into the English language — "I can't, but I know a man who can"; and in the early 1990s, a campaign describing the AA as the "fourth emergency service". Membership expanded under Dyer's leadership by 30 per cent to almost nine million. A new domestic emergency service was introduced to attract those who did not necessarily

need a mechanic or own a car — those for instance, who required a plumber in the middle of the night. Maps and guides were published, and the AA's insurance division flourished.

The son of a major-general, Simon Dyer was born in Winchester but brought up during the war in India, and educated at Ampleforth, at St Edmund Hall, Oxford, where he read law, and at the Sorbonne. He qualified as a chartered accountant in 1967, and worked in Britain and French West Africa for Coopers & Lybrand.

He joined the AA in 1967 as chief accountant, and was promoted rapidly through the organisation. In 1970 he was made head of touring and travelling, and established an advisory service to holiday-makers who had made their booking through the AA, and who then found themselves in legal dispute with their tour operator. In 1973 he became director of travel and membership administration; in 1977 he moved to the AA's core activity as director of road service operations. Five years later he was appointed managing director and one of the first executive members of the AA Committee. And in 1987 he was made Director General. He was appointed CBE last year.

Dyer liked tennis, skiing and swimming and was particularly proud when he won first prize for tomatoes at the Kew Flower Show. He spent holidays with his family in a restored house near Vaison la Romaine in France, where he worked on his own small vineyard, and he was eventually able to grow enough grapes to earn the status of a local wine producer.

He is survived by his wife Gay and two daughters.

LUDWIK LUBIENSKI

Ludwik Lubinski, Chief of the wartime Polish Military Mission in Gibraltar, died in London on January 22 aged 83. He was born on May 6, 1912.

LUDWIK LUBIENSKI was lucky not to be on the plane in which General Sikorski, head of the Polish Government in Exile, was killed on July 4, 1943. That night Lubinski had been due to fly back to Poland. He had landed at Gibraltar en route from the Middle East. But at the last minute his place was taken by a Polish courier who had just arrived from Poland.

Lubinski and the Governor of Gibraltar, Sir Noel Mason-Macfarlane, watched Sikorski take off and, to their horror, saw his aircraft crash into the sea. The crash robbed Poland of any hope for a happier outcome for the country at the end of the war after Sikorski's death there was no one left of his stature and authority to stand up for the country's aspirations.

Lubinski was born on his family estate at Kasimiera Wielka near Cracow. After law studies at the Jagiellonian University in Cracow he did his national service in the horse artillery and then joined the Polish Foreign Office. Early in 1939 he was appointed

secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Colonel Josef Beck.

On the invasion of Poland by Germany on September 1, 1939, he acted as liaison officer between Colonel Beck and the Polish High Command. On September 17, after the Soviet invasion from the East, the Polish Government crossed into Romania and was there interned. But Lubinski, who had crossed the border with Beck, was given permission by the latter to try to escape, and managed to get to France where a Polish Government-in-Exile and an army was being formed under General Sikorski.

After the French defeat Lubinski was one of some 30,000 Polish soldiers and airmen who managed to evade capture again and reach the haven of Britain. After several appointments with the Polish Forces in Britain and the Middle East he was in 1943 appointed Chief of the Polish Military Mission in Gibraltar, to which many Poles, escaping from Nazi occupied Europe, were making their way. Lubinski, a good tennis player, became a popular officer and established a personal friendship with Gibraltar's Governor, General Sir Noel Mason-Macfarlane who was, after the war, to be godfather to Lubinski's oldest child.

When Sikorski landed on the Rock in July 1943 on his way back to England from visiting Polish troops in the Middle East, Lubinski, loyal as ever to his old master Colonel Beck, still languishing in internment in Romania, was able to persuade Sikorski to try to get him out, a thing Sikorski's antipathy to the prewar Polish regime had previously made him reluctant to do. In the event, Beck was to die before anything could be attempted.

After the air crash, Lubinski had the grim task of identifying Sikorski's body, but that of his daughter, the Commandant of the Polish woman's forces, with whom Lubinski had been playing tennis just hours earlier, was never found. Later in the war Lubinski served in Italy with the Polish II Corps, attached to its headquarters as officer on special duties to its commander, General Anders.

After the war Lubinski was to share the roofless fate of the thousands of Polish exiles. For a time he worked for Radio Free Europe in Munich. He was a founding member and long-time secretary to the Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum in London.

Ludwik Lubinski is survived by three daughters, one of whom is the actress Rula Lenska. His wife, from whom he was separated, predeceased him by one month.

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Dusty Miller and 'Chief' Brooks were engine fitters on Wellingtons during the last war. Great mates then, Dusty still helps out his old friend through donations to the Fund now that both are not so good by 'Chief'. You can ensure we are always there to help the whole RAF family: aircrew, ground staff, serving as well as ex-RAF, their spouses and dependent children by making a donation now and remembering us in your will. Call 0171 234 1234.

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THE CAMPAIGN IN OUDE.

(From Our Special Correspondent)

CAMP NEAR BRANKEE, Jan. 3

... It is a most difficult matter to organize an expedition in the night in an unknown country. One man may make his way towards a certain point guided by local knowledge, a compass, and the stars, but the direction of elephants, camels and guns over rice-fields, past swamps, forests, ditches, rivers unknown, is a very different matter. If, in the Duke's opinion, there were a few generals who could get a large corps into Hyde Park, but few or none who could get them out again in broad daylight, it may be imagined that it is by no means simple to the uninitiated to get infantry, cavalry, and guns in proper order, out on the open in a pitch-dark night. Our little expedition consisted of the 7th Hussars, headquarters of the Carabins, 1st Punjab Cavalry, a troop of the Royal Horse Artillery (six guns), the 15th Brigade, a detachment of Her Majesty's 20th, and a wing of the 10th Battalion. As Captain Fitzgerald collected 150

ON THIS DAY

February 22, 1859

Night marches in all ages have provided a test of discipline. This one, the report concludes, reached its destination ahead of time, elephants and all.

elephants. It was arranged that one half of the force should be mounted — five on each of these unwieldy locomotives — the other half marching ... Lord Clyde, with his shoulder bandaged up, was, much against his will, obliged to go in a dooley. It was generally supposed that we were going to aid Grant in some difficulty ... At 8 o'clock the regiments were formed up in front of their camps, and at 8.30 they were marched off with the usual advance guard, into the darkness. Not a light

was to be seen, save the glare of watch-fires: but soon there appeared before us, like a light in some wintry sea, one steady flame. A lantern had been mounted on the back of an elephant ... the men were in high spirits. Unknown with flaring torches after a time were put forward to cast a light on the pitfalls, the heavy ditches, the heavy fields, the ditches, and wells which lay in our course ... The Madras Light Cavalry, a most efficient set of men, were unwittingly left behind. They were formed up in their proper place. But Captain Macgregor did not receive the order to move off and after a long halt in the cold, he rode off to see what had become of the rest. He could not find them. He then marched off his troop, circled round the camp, came back, marched again and after an ineffectual search returned to camp at midnight ... The column once started moved off in a straight line to Brankie. Elephants crashing in one leaden line through gates, over swampy grass, through tall fields, can outmatch cavalry or infantry, and the latter regulated the pace. The moving light-house guided the officers, and so tramp, tramp, splash, splash, thud, thud, away they proceeded.



EDUCATION 33

David Blunkett on Labour's vision of lifelong learning



ARTS 29-31

Villains bring out the gags in a zany new play



SPORT 35-40

Watford double act back in the old routine

TELEVISION AND RADIO
Pages 38-39

THE TIMES

BUSINESS EDITOR Lindsay Cook

FRIDAY FEBRUARY 23 1996

ICI looks at share buybacks and acquisitions



Spall: "expect a change"

BY CARL MORTIMER

ICI, the cash-rich chemicals group, is looking at the idea of share buybacks as part of a drive to make better use of its huge balance sheet. Yesterday, it announced a near doubling of pre-tax profits from £514 million to £951 million for the year after a resilient performance in a fourth quarter that was marred by the effect of customer destocking and lower prices for bulk chemicals.

ICI came through the year cash positive in spite of a 72 per cent increase in capital expenditure to £661 million, leaving the group with net debt of £99 million, a balance sheet gearing ratio of only 2 per cent.

Alan Spall, finance director, said that the

balance-sheet was under-utilised. "This is not in line with good management or our policy and you can expect this to change," he said, indicating that a share buyback was an option. "It is something we are always considering," he said, adding that acquisitions were also on the agenda.

He said that ICI would be comfortable with a gearing ratio of 25 per cent throughout the cycle, rising to 40 per cent for the right acquisition. "That would give us £2 billion to £3 billion of firepower."

ICI has embarked on a drive to improve its return on capital to 20 per cent. It is spending £30 million on management consultants that are helping ICI to home in cost-saving measures, with a target of £400 million. These

will include headcount reduction to help to achieve productivity increases of 5 per cent a year over the next three years.

ICI raised its revenues 12 per cent to £80.3 billion during 1995, with an 8 per cent contribution from higher selling prices in all businesses. Volume growth accounted for 3 per cent and acquisitions 1 per cent of the total. Sir Ronald Hampel, chairman, said that weaker bulk chemical prices would have an adverse impact, but he expected world demand to pick up after a slow start to the year. A dividend of 30p is being paid for the full year, up from 27.5p and covered 2.6 times by earnings.

Analysts said that the plans by ICI to reshape its business and to enhance shareholder value were positive and could trigger a

wider reassessment of the group's profit profile, dividend policy, and market rating.

Charles Lambert, an analyst at Merrill Lynch, said that he sees ICI shares trading up to 950p a share, against a previous 750p-850p trading range. He added: "What we are seeing is something of a re-rating. Sentiment overall seems to be positive." ICI shares closed at 857p, up 25p on the day.

Philip Morrish, analyst at Nikko Europe, described the moves announced by ICI as "a long-term plan to shake up the whole business culture and begin to deliver value to shareholders". He said that what was now being seen was "a new ICI".

Tempus, page 24

Gas chief sets up clash with regulator

BY CHRISTINE BUCKLEY

BRITISH GAS put itself on a collision course with the industry regulator yesterday by declaring that the two sides were so opposed over the price review for TransCo, its pipeline business, that a referral to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission seemed inevitable.

Richard Giordano, its chairman, said Ofgas was seeking to impose controls with a toughness that reflected the cash-generation maturity of the business, and that later down the line British Gas could seek relaxation of those curbs as its capital expenditure demands increased. But that would be unacceptable to shareholders and Ofgas's requests for capital expenditure projections extending 25 years were unreasonable, he said.

The gap between the company and Ofgas was more than a question of figures, Mr Giordano went on. "The difference is more fundamental. It is about how a utility should be managed." The issue was crucial for British Gas, which reported a 21 per cent fall in pre-tax profits, he added. "Sizeable sums of money will be at stake."

Clare Spenswood, the gas regulator, will decide in the next two months what the rate of return on the pipeline business should be. At present it is set at 4 per cent.

An MMC referral will make it difficult to value TransCo, which will be the profitable half of the demerger when British Gas splits. But Mr Giordano said that the demerger timetable would not be affected, and could be completed by the end of the year, ahead of the scheduled split in spring 1997.

British Gas also clashed with Ofgas by saying it expected that the start of competition in the domestic market, which is due to take place on April 1, would be delayed. Cedric Brown, chief executive, said a probable date would be April 29. But Ofgas said that the starting date remained April 1.

The company also said it could seek an MMC referral over its exposure to the costly take-or-pay contracts, if it was

unable to find a solution by other means. It failed in its appeal to the Government for a levy to support its exposure to contracts worth £40 billion, which could lead to losses of £1.5 billion, leaving British Gas to try to renegotiate the contracts with suppliers reluctant to alter arrangements.

Mr Giordano said that the issue could not be allowed to lie because the company was paying the bill. Last year it made a provision of £83 million to cover losses on the contracts but said it expected that amount to be less this year.

British Gas, which at the start of the year appointed a chief negotiator to lead the talks with the producers, said it wanted a solution by the end of the year and expected to report some tangible progress within two to three months. Mr Giordano repeated the complaint that take-or-pay exposure was a legacy from the monopoly era and was a problem that should be addressed by the industry.

The company warned that it would see further erosion in its commercial and industrial business this year as over-supply and cheaper gas from competitors swamp the market.

British Gas has maintained a market share of 35 per cent but falling prices helped to drag its gas-supply operation to a £252 million loss in the year to December 31, more than five times the £53 million loss in the previous year.

Profits in the company's exploration and production division climbed from £295 million to £449 million as new production fed in. The company's overall pre-tax profits of £951 million were curbed by write-downs of £394 million. It wrote down the value of some property and plant by £194 million, while clean-ups on contaminated plants were charged at £200 million.

The final dividend was maintained at 8.1p, making the total 14.5p — the same as the previous year.

Pennington, page 23
Tempus, page 24



Gas mains: Richard Giordano, chairman, right, with Cedric Brown, chief executive, yesterday

Rentokil rethink fails to tempt BET

BY ALASTAIR MURRAY

BET, the business service company, said last night that it had rejected a new approach from Rentokil to buy part of the company.

The two companies are locked in a hostile takeover battle after Rentokil launched a £1.8 billion bid last Friday. BET said it had rejected the approach for its textile and distribution divisions, together with most of its business service distribution, because it saw "no shareholder benefit in discussing the sale".

The company added that the sale would have meant Rentokil assuming control of key strategic businesses, with strong growth prospects and attractive margins, which were central to the future of the business and constituted three quarters of the group's

turnover. Rentokil said that it was disappointed that the BET board had rejected the deal out of hand.

Rentokil denied that the new approach implied it would automatically dispose of BET's plant services and conference and resort management businesses. Last Friday, the company said that it would place these businesses "under review" if its takeover bid succeeded.

It is not clear whether Rentokil was acting under pressure from its shareholders to try to come up with an agreed takeover. But it is understood that the two parties did not discuss a new price. Rentokil's share price closed up 6.5p, while BET rose 1p to 196.5p, 6.5p above the offer price of 190p.

Industry is still in the doldrums, says CBI

BY PHILIP BASSETT, INDUSTRIAL EDITOR

PROSPECTS of a further cut in interest rates remain high to day as industry's order books continue to fall and business leaders cast doubt on the Government's growth forecast, even though new figures yesterday showed a slight improvement in growth overall.

In the light of a new forecast today from the Confederation of British Industry of only sluggish growth in the first half of this year, and after GDP figures yesterday suggesting that growth is running below trend, CBI economists held to their belief that Kenneth Clarke, the Chancellor, will authorise a further cut in rates to try to achieve the Government's 3 per cent growth target.

City analysts suggested that the Treasury and the Bank of England were "pleasantly surprised" by an upward revision in GDP growth in the final quarter of last year, suggesting that growth was slightly stronger than had been thought.

New figures from the Central Statistical Office revised growth in the quarter up from 0.4 to 0.5 per cent, after stronger output in the service and construction sectors.

Although this lifted the annual growth rate from 1.8 to 1.9 per cent, the annual rate is

at its lowest since the first quarter of 1993, and remains on a downward trend.

Forecasters suggested that the revisions carried few implications for policy, and maintained their view that Mr Clarke and Eddie George, Governor of the Bank of England, will agree a further cut in rates at their March or April meeting — with the prospect of another cut in summer.

CBI economists are assuming probably two cuts, followed by a rise early next year, in their latest forecast, out today, which sharply cuts their growth predictions for 1996 from the 2.5 per cent, suggested at the time of the Budget, to 2.1 per cent now.

Doubt that the Government will hit its growth target is fuelled by the knock-on effects of weaker than expected performances by manufacturing and construction at the end of last year and the unwinding of excessive stock levels.

The CBI says economic growth will be sluggish in the first half, picking up as the year goes on, and leading to a "robust" upturn in 1997, when GDP is forecast to grow by 3 per cent.

The CBI's latest monthly industrial trends survey today shows total orders falling again.

BUSINESS TODAY

STOCK MARKET INDICES

FT-SE 100	3740.0	(+14.4)
Yield	3.82%	
FT-SE All Share	1042.98	(+6.83)
Nikkei	20240.94	(-31.29)
Dow Jones	5547.75	(+31.79)
S&P Composite	652.35	(+4.25)

US RATE

Federal Funds	5 1/4%	(5 1/4%)
Long Bond	6 5/8%	(6 5/8%)
Yield	6.37%	(6.37%)

LONDON MONEY

3-mth Interbank	5 1/4%	(5 1/4%)
Libor 6m	107 1/2	(107 1/2)

STERLING

New York	1.5430*	(1.5440)
London	1.5428	(1.5429)
DM	2.2370	(2.2414)
FF	7.7135	(7.7280)
Yen	1.6233	(1.6256)
¥ Index	101.88	(102.30)
£ Index	63.6	(63.7)

US DOLLAR

London	1.4507*	(1.4492)
DM	4.9330*	(4.9360)
FF	1.1613*	(1.1635)
Yen	104.88*	(104.90)
¥ Index	96.1	(96.5)

TOKYO

Tokyo close Yen 106.11		
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NORTH SEA OIL

Brent 15-day (May)	\$17.80	(\$17.55)
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GOLD

London close	\$400.55	(\$397.15)
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* denotes midday trading price

Californian regulators accuse Lloyd's

BY SARAH BAGNALL

CALIFORNIA regulators are accusing Lloyd's of London of defrauding more than 500 American names, who are being asked to stump up more than \$500 million to meet losses incurred as a result of their participation in the world's largest insurance market.

Lloyd's is one of 250 defendants in the action, which includes dozens of Lloyd's agencies many of which have ceased trading. Also listed among the defendants are David Rowland, Lloyd's chairman, Ron Sandler, chief executive, and Peter Middleton, former chief executive.

The People of the State of California (the state) allege that Lloyd's "has, and presently is, engaged in a scheme to defraud California investors in connection with the offer and sale of unqualified securities in California". The state claims these securities include Lloyd's membership and investment contracts. A Lloyd's spokesman said: "Lloyd's is sure that it has violated no state requirements and can offer a firm defence to all charges."

The preliminary hearing is due to be heard in Los Angeles next week, to which Lloyd's will send a legal representative. The Hon Ernest Hiroshige, the judge, will hear representations from the various parties in order to decide whether the case should proceed to court.

If the plaintiffs are successful, the American names' assets will be frozen until a court judgment is reached. This course of action is being taken in various other American states, none of which have progressed further than preliminary hearings to date.

Carlton pulls back from launching bid for MAI

BY MELVYN MARCUS AND ERIC REGULY

CARLTON Communications' tentative plan to launch a £1.5 billion-plus spoiler bid for MAI, the rival ITV company which plans to merge with United News & Media, owners of the Express newspapers, was effectively aborted yesterday.

As speculation mounted that Carlton was preparing to launch a hostile bid for MAI next week, the Takeover Panel insisted that Carlton, led by Michael Green, should clarify its intentions. The Panel contacted Hambros, Carlton's financial adviser, shortly after 9am. In response to the Panel's directive, Carlton said that "in the present circumstances, it does not intend to intervene in the proposed merger between United News & Media

and MAI". Speculative buying sent MAI's share price up 34p to a high of 470p in early trading. MAI, concerned that its shares were rising in a "false market," then pressed the Takeover Panel to force a statement out of Carlton.

In the wake of Carlton's statement, MAI's share price plunged to 407p before closing 17p lower at 419p, while Carlton's shares, down 22p to 984p in early trading, ended 7p higher at £10.13. United finished at 653p, up 12p.

In spite of the brevity of Carlton's statement, it is widely accepted that the company has been gearing up for an MAI bid. Feelers were put out to Merrill Lynch, the US broking house, earlier this week amid rumours that

Carlton was trying to amass a £2 billion war chest.

Sarah Simon, MAI's group development manager, said Carlton would have faced "tough regulatory hurdles" because the purchase of MAI, owner of the Meridian and Anglia ITV franchises, would give it about 36 per cent of ITV advertising revenue against the 23 per cent it now controls. Carlton made an undertaking with the Office of Fair Trading in 1994 to control no more than 25 per cent.

Analysts think Carlton might buy minority stakes in a couple of the smaller ITV companies, such as HTV or Scottish Television, in the hopes that the advertising control limit will eventually be raised.

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Duke angered by nuclear sale leak

By Christine Buckley

DUKE POWER, the American utility at the centre of increasing confusion over the planned privatisation of British Energy, the core of Britain's nuclear power industry, said yesterday it would be more careful in its dealings in the UK.

Clearly, irritated after the Department of Trade and Industry revealed that it had indicated an interest in the sale, Duke said it had shown an interest through Schroders, the merchant bank, but that the price and liabilities had

made the UK's nuclear plant unattractive. Randy Wheelieff, a spokesman for Duke, said the company had been surprised at the portrayal of its interest. "We shall learn from this the next time we are dealing in the UK."

Tim Eggar, the Energy Minister, surprised the City when he said the Government would consider a trade sale and that Duke Power had made an indirect approach. His remarks were made on the day the Parliamentary

trade and industry select committee produced a critical report on the planned privatisation of British Energy.

The US company added to the confusion when it both denied an interest and confirmed talks between Schroders, on its behalf, and BZW, adviser to the DTI.

No one was available for comment at Schroders yesterday, but it also is understood to be unhappy with the leak. Mr Wheelieff said Duke would continue to monitor the situation but did not expect any fresh communication in the near future. "The price and some of the liabilities on the plants would make it unattractive to us," he said.

The DTI and the Treasury are wrangling with directors of British Energy over what proportion of the company's £8 billion decommissioning liabilities will be funded from revenues, and how much from the levy on consumer bills.

The DTI stuck rigidly to its statement of the previous day when it said an indirect indication of interest had been shown by Duke Power.



CHRISTOPHER NORLAND, chairman of Frank Usher, with Miranda Taylor who is modeling the clothes that earned the womenswear group pre-tax profits of £1.4 million (£1 million) in the six months to November 30. The interim dividend, due April 3, was lifted from 3.5p to 4p and is payable out of earnings of 11p a share, up from 9p last time.

million) in the six months to November 30. The interim dividend, due April 3, was lifted from 3.5p to 4p and is payable out of earnings of 11p a share, up from 9p last time.

Carnival acquires stake in Airtours

By Marianne Curphey

CARNIVAL Cruise Corporation, the world's largest cruise company, is to pay more than £200 million for a 29.6 per cent stake in Airtours, the UK's second biggest tour operator.

In a deal described as "friendly", Carnival will subscribe to an issue of 20 million new shares at £5—50p more than Airtours' closing price yesterday after shares jumped 20p on the news.

David Crossland, Airtours' chairman, will sell at least five million of his shares, reducing his personal stake in the company 5 per cent to 19.4 per cent, and netting him about

£22.5 million. Carnival will buy another 20 million shares at £4.50. Airtours denied it was the prelude to a full takeover. Mr Crossland joins the Carnival board: Micky Arison and Howard Frank, chairman and vice-chairman of Carnival, join Airtours.

Shares in First Choice, the UK's second largest tour operator, rose 7p to 69p yesterday. Francis Baron, chief executive, said: "We believe the cautious approach of the major tour operators will ensure that more satisfactory margins can be generated for summer 1996." *Tempus, page 24*

Greenspan post renewed

President Clinton is to nominate Alan Greenspan for another term as chairman of the Federal Reserve. White House sources said. However, no final decision has yet been taken on who will fill the remaining two seats on the board.

Alice Rivlin, federal budget director, is believed to be under consideration to become vice-chairman, replacing Alan Blinder, who has returned to a teaching post. Lawrence Meyer, an economist and professor at Washington University in St Louis, is thought to be the leading contender to fill the other post.

Ideal decision

Trafalgar House received shareholder approval at its annual meeting to sell its Ideal Homes subsidiary to Persimmon for £180 million. It denied that it plans to sell Cunard, the shipping line. Simon Keswick, chairman, said: "There are no further disposals in the pipeline."

Shareholders also approved a long-term incentive plan that will allow senior management to receive bonuses of up to 30 per cent of their salary, depending on performance targets being met.

Cookson plan

Cookson Group, the specialist industrial materials group, is investing £8 million in Cookson Matthey Ceramics, its 50-50 ceramics joint venture with Johnson Matthey, in two new facilities in Asia. There will be a £3 million investment in a zirconia opacifier plant — which makes the key ingredients used in the tile, tableware and sanitaryware industries — near Bangalore, India, and a further £4.5 million will be invested in a new plant in Malaysia.

Pensions court ruling

MEMBERS of occupational pension schemes in dispute with their trustees will be able to claim compensation for distress and inconvenience after a High Court ruling yesterday (Sara McConnell writes).

Mr Justice Robert Walker held that the pension ombudsman was within his powers to order scheme trustees to make distress payments irrespective of financial loss. Julian Farrand, the present ombudsman,

has consistently argued that he should be able to make such awards, but, until now, the legal position was unclear.

The judge held that the ombudsman could tell Westminster City Council to pay £1,000 for distress to a redundant worker misinformed as the pension it would pay.

Norman Russell, solicitor for the ombudsman, later said: "Consumers will have to be treated decently by trustees."

BRITISH GAS PLC 1995 ANNUAL RESULTS

Chairman's Statement

In spite of the sharp fall in gas prices in our industrial and commercial markets and the warm weather throughout 1995, we have held our own. Profits, before exceptionals, are broadly in line with last year. This has been achieved through the benefits of our massive restructuring programme and much better results in our Exploration and Production business. Implementing a restructuring of this magnitude has inevitably led to a deterioration in our service to customers. However, the restructuring is critical to the future competitiveness of British Gas and we are working hard to restore high levels of customer service and goodwill.

RV Giordano

Richard V Giordano, Chairman
22 February 1996.

- FINAL DIVIDEND MAINTAINED AT 8.1P MAKING A TOTAL PAYMENT OF 14.5P (1994 14.5P).
- HISTORICAL COST PROFIT ON A PRE-EXCEPTIONAL BASIS £903 MILLION COMPARED WITH £927 MILLION (1994).
- RESTRUCTURING OF THE UK GAS BUSINESS DELIVERED ANNUALISED COST SAVINGS OF APPROXIMATELY £350 MILLION.
- EXCEPTIONAL CHARGES OF £394 MILLION HAVE BEEN MADE IN RESPECT OF PROPERTY AND PLANT WRITE-DOWNS TOGETHER WITH ENVIRONMENTAL PROVISIONS LARGEY FOR THE RECENTLY ANNOUNCED LANDFILL TAX.

	THE RESULTS AT A GLANCE			
	Year ended 31 December		Historical cost	
	Current cost	Historical cost	1995	1994
	£m	£m	1995	1994
Turnover				
- continuing operations	8 601	9 029	8 601	9 029
- discontinued operations	—	669	—	669
	8 601	9 698	8 601	9 698
Operating profit before exceptional charges	977	1 182	1 391	1 567
Exceptional charges (i)	(394)	(195)	(394)	(195)
Operating profit (ii)	583	987	997	1 368
Profit on ordinary activities before taxation	607	918	986	1 245
Profit for the financial period before exceptional charges	524	600	905	927
Profit for the financial period after exceptional charges	130	410	309	737
Earnings per ordinary share				
- basic	2.9p	9.5p	11.6p	17.0p
- adjusted (iii)	12.0p	13.9p	20.7p	21.4p
Interim dividend per ordinary share	6.4p	6.4p	6.4p	6.4p
Proposed final dividend per ordinary share	8.1p	8.1p	8.1p	8.1p
Total dividend per ordinary share	14.5p	14.5p	14.5p	14.5p

(i) Exceptional charges comprise property and plant write-downs (£194m, 1994 £nil) and environmental charges (£200m, 1994 £98m). 1994 includes a £105m restructuring charge.

(ii) Operating profit on continuing operations includes a provision of £83m (1994 £nil) against Take or Pay prepayments on long-term gas purchase contracts. 1994 operating profit includes results in respect of discontinued operations (£119m).

(iii) Adjusted earnings exclude the effect of exceptional charges.

Copies of the 1995 Fourth Quarter and Full Year Results are available from British Gas plc, Investor Relations Department, Rivermill House, 152 Grosvenor Road, London SW1V 3JL. Telephone 0171 611 2081.

British Gas

Bank Swap

Bank	Swap	Bank	Swap
Australia S	2.15	1.98	
Belgium S	18.77	18.77	
Canada S	40.09	44.79	
Denmark S	2.22	2.072	
France S	0.225	0.225	
Germany S	9.99	8.48	
Italy S	7.54	6.80	
Japan S	6.13	7.48	
Netherlands S	2.40	2.19	
Portugal S	387.00	388.00	
Spain S	12.88	11.68	
Sweden S	1.08	0.94	
Switzerland S	5.180	4.800	
Taiwan S	2827.00	2282.00	
UK S	178.50	181.00	
USA S	0.591	0.558	
Netherlands Gld	2.825	2.825	
New Zealand S	2.42	2.51	
Norway S	10.38	9.59	
Portugal Esc	244.50	288.00	
Spain Ptas	131	141	
Sweden Kr	186.00	188.00	
Switzerland Fr	11.08	10.55	
Taiwan N	1.78	1.78	
Turkey Lira	88618.0	84518.0	
USA S	1.841	1.811	

Rates for small denomination bank notes only as supplied by Barclays Bank PLC. Different rates apply to travellers' cheques. Rates as at close of trading yesterday.



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NOW, YOU CAN HAVE BEARINGS WITH BUILT-IN FEELERS. These feelers, known as sensors, measure speed of rotation, acceleration, temperature or load. They can give a warning when something becomes too hot, runs too fast or becomes overloaded. For a number of years they have been in series production by SKF for the automobile industry and have achieved widespread acceptance.

Sensors can readily be applied in practically all branches of mechanical engineering. The largest order we have so far received in this field has been from Jungheinrich of Hamburg. The sensorised bearings are being used in a new generation of fork lift trucks. This has enabled the bearings and sensorisation of an electrically controlled unit to be brought together for the first time. An important prerequisite is that the sensorised bearings must be unaffected by external magnetic fields. This has been proven through a series of tests which have led to CE-approval.

Other applications include lifts, escalators, bus and train doors, as well as electric motors.

GROUP EARNINGS

Consolidated income after financial income and expense 1995: SEK 3 334 M, compared with SEK 1 819 M in 1994. Group sales rose to SEK 36 700 M (33 273). Other operating income amounted to SEK 106 M (151).

After depreciation totaling SEK 1 350 M (1 416), operating income amounted to SEK 3 945 M (2 533). Net financial expense was SEK -611 M (-714).

Earnings per share amounted to SEK 17.95 (11.85). The return on capital employed was 19.0 percent (13.1) and on shareholders' equity 19.4 percent (13.3). Group solvency improved during 1995 from 29.1 percent to 31.6 percent at year-end.

INCREASED INVESTMENT

Capital expenditures in property, plant and equipment increased to SEK 2 296 M (1 356). This sharp increase is the result of a decision to accelerate the technological upgrading of the Group's plants to achieve greater flexibility, improve productivity and reduce costs.

The Group's investments in research and development increased to SEK 598 M (542), representing nearly two percent of annual sales.

The Annual Report 1995 can be ordered from: SKF Group Public Affairs, S-415 50 Göteborg, Sweden. Tel: +46 31 37 10 00, Fax: +46 31 37 17 22.

AVERAGE RATE OF EXCHANGE:
1995: 1 GBP = 11.27 SEK, 1994: 1 GBP = 11.80 SEK.

SKF

Bingo can fight back says Rank

Cash push Wicks to USM loss

Nadir secretary with film ring on flight

□ British Gas chairman has brought shareholders only trouble □ Mutuals try to make friends □ Future of the Stock Exchange

Too much gas from Giordano

THE sagging financial fortunes of British Gas and the perils facing it have again been overshadowed by a spat over boardroom pay. Again, the accusations made by the Labour Party are spurious. Yet again, the arrangements made by the chairman of British Gas, this time for his own pay, are obscure enough for smoke theorists to look for fire.

The blame rests largely on the broad shoulders of Richard Giordano himself. For the baying hordes and for British Gas shareholders alike, his handsome visage — not craggy Cedric Brown, the man offered up as scapegoat — is now the unacceptable face of British capitalism.

British Gas has suffered a co-ordinated and undesired attack on its business by government. This assault caused most of its difficulties. Instead of appealing to shareholders, customers and public opinion, however, British Gas under Mr Giordano has made itself friendless. When competition arrives, many customers will desert, however illogically, at the first opportunity.

Mr Giordano claims that Gas's corporate restructuring "has inevitably led to deterioration of our service to customers". There was no inevitability about it. He pushed through cost-saving moves that axed too many key people too soon and will cost

the company more than their wages. You do not become competitive by alienating customers.

That is also the main significance of the pay issue. Mr Giordano led the committee that fixed Cedric Brown's pay at £475,000, neatly accommodating the £450,000 he is paid for a 3½ day week as part-time chairman. It was vital to this process that Mr Giordano should be non-executive. British Gas stated in its accounts that its remuneration committee was composed of non-executives. The chairman finally left it last year. When Mr Brown retired early, Mr Giordano will effectively become chief executive ahead of the hastily plotted 1997 split.

Was Mr Giordano ever really non-executive? As British Gas rightly explains, the sterling-dollar split in his pay was properly disclosed in its 1993 accounts. One contract was with British Gas as chairman, the other with BG Holdings Inc "as president of that company" for a minimum of three years. The PLCs and the soon-to-be went into a flat spin and for some hours were unable to respond.

Employment Select Committee that this reflected services he performed for British Gas abroad. Such arrangements seem odd for a non-executive chairman. The employee role of president of an overseas subsidiary looks incompatible. Yet Price Waterhouse, praised by Mr Giordano for their advice on the tax arrangements, signed the accounts in their role as auditor that insisted he must be non-executive.

Mr Giordano insists there is "nothing fishy" in his arrangements. The damage he has wreaked on British Gas shareholders is equally unambiguous.

Nationwide the mutual's friend

THE benefit of mutuality was being banded around by the Nationwide Building Society yesterday, as it cut its mortgage rate for its 1.3 million borrowers and announced better savings rates for many more. The PLCs and the soon-to-be went into a flat spin and for some hours were unable to respond.

PENNINGTON



But then Abbey National, first to convert in 1989, became bold. Its members had received their 100 shares more than six years ago and the bank was not considering cutting its mortgage rate, and even worse reducing its margins by increasing the amount paid to savers. But the market was not so sure it could hold out and its share price fell.

We won't move either, echoed Halifax, which converts next year and patently does not want to reduce its stock market value between times. National & Provincial kept quiet ahead of its absorption into Abbey National — it no longer has a voice.

A year is a long time in the world of building societies. In early 1995, N&P was selling its

own package of benefits of mutuality and trying to persuade the City that it was not a candidate for takeover. It was not long before N&P started merger talks with Nationwide and then the Abbey moved in. If Nationwide's talks had been successful, it, too, would be joining the long queue of mutuals plumping up for market.

Now the Nationwide, with no serious suitors either, has decided to cut its annual profits and its dowsy in half. Members, as building society customers prefer to be called, have not been able to understand, for a century or more, the desire to build up reserves. There was a little bit more logic when bonuses started being handed out on conversion or takeover — at least for the lucky beneficiaries — but too many were disappointed by missing out.

With the Nationwide no one is excluded, probably not even the customers of the converted and the soon-to-be. With snow on the ground and previous few housebuyers on the high street, whatever they might say today or even tomorrow is likely to

change a tad once Easter is upon us, should Nationwide be seen to winning a larger share of the mortgage market. Not that we can expect widespread largesse extending to savers but the two biggest mortgage lenders cannot afford to sit on their wide margins and let Nationwide win their customers and all the attached selling opportunities.

The return of Lawrence

THE January assassination of Michael Lawrence, the Stock Exchange's former chief executive, always augured ill for the Tower's image. On Monday, John Kemp-Welch, chairman of the Stock Exchange, was given a hard time by the House of Commons Treasury committee which is clearly concerned about the way in which SE chief executives have a habit of being whirled out of their swing chairs. Diane Abbott, a Labour MP, suggested that the Stock Exchange was run more "like a club than a business". Quentin Davies, a Conservative MP, took the

view that the organisation was undergoing "something of an identity crisis". Mr Kemp-Welch, who politely rejected such allegations, was left to make the most of his revelation that the Stock Exchange has decided to conduct an inquiry into the way it runs itself. Ian Plenderleith and Ian Salter, the Stock Exchange's deputy chairmen, will sound out members on issues such as consultancy procedures and report within three months. Yawn-making stuff but the committee, which is focusing on the Stock Exchange's future, can expect a little more excitement on Wednesday when Mr Lawrence makes his appearance. Leaks of his written submission to the committee merely confirm the widely held belief that the City's major market-making firms, opposed to the manner in which Mr Lawrence wanted to introduce an element of order matching transactions (where shares are transferred from buyer to seller without going through a market-maker), were the prime movers behind his unceremonious dismissal.

It will be interesting to see whether the committee, led by Sir Tom Arnold, manages to ascertain the identity of the Godfather behind this particular conspiracy — an open secret in the vicinity of Throgmorton Street.

Bingo can fight back, says Rank

By ALASDAIR MURRAY

RANK ORGANISATION, the leisure company, yesterday unveiled a 6 per cent rise in 1995 profits, to £407 million, in spite of competition from the National Lottery.

Profits in the recreation division fell by £19 million, to £50 million, after a 10 per cent drop in bingo attendance. The company said that, as a result, it had shut or sold 28 smaller bingo clubs in 1995 and that it expects to dispose of a further 13 this year.

However, Rank was optimistic that bingo could fight back against the lottery, pointing to a drop from 60 to 20 per cent in bingo players' regular playing lottery scratchcards. The company said it will concentrate on opening larger bingo clubs to win back punters. It aims to open 16 big clubs, with average seating of 2,000, in 1996. The company is hopeful that a government consultative paper on deregulation in the gambling industry, due out in the next few weeks, will recommend that bingo clubs be allowed to advertise.

Overall group turnover rose by 5 per cent, to £2.31 billion. The film and television divi-

sion posted profits of £82 million, up 11 per cent, boosted by a bumper number of Hollywood releases. There was also a record contribution from the Pinewood film studios, which produced 22 films during the year. Rank said that it will launch a major expansion of Odson multiplex cinemas over the next few years.

The holiday division, which includes Britains, benefited in the UK from good summer weather. The number of holidays sold rose by 5 per cent and profits were up by 9 per cent, to £63 million. European summer holiday bookings for 1996 are strong, but UK bookings are up by about 2 per cent.

Leisure businesses, which include nightclubs and the Hard Rock Cafe restaurant chain, raised profits by a quarter, to £69 million.

Profits of Rank Xerox, the photocopier company, increased, but Rank's share declined to £187 million after the reduction in its stake last year from 33 to 26 per cent.

The dividend rises by 19 per cent, to 15.75p, due on April 19.

Times, page 24

Costs push Wickes to £258m loss

THE cost of withdrawing from its loss-making timber merchant businesses forced Wickes, the do-it-yourself chain, to a loss of £258 million (£30.1 million profit) in the year to December 31 (Sarah Bagnall writes).

The slump resulted from the write-back of £186 million of goodwill, together with £86 million of costs associated with the sale of Hunter Timber and Builders Mate.

Henry Sweetbaum, chairman, said 1995 was a year of "unparalleled change" that had transformed it into a purely retail business with 153 stores in five countries.

Wickes outperformed the market and its rivals with a like-for-like sales advance of 11 per cent. UK operating profits rose 9 per cent to £30.8 million. The final dividend of 1.5p, due July 4, makes a total for the year of 2.1p (1.8p).

Inquiry into share trading 'under way'

THE German securities supervisory board is understood to be investigating alleged insider trading in shares of Bremer Vulkan, the German shipbuilder that has filed for protection from its creditors after revealing a DM1 billion loss (Philip Pangalos writes).

Bremer Vulkan has 23,000 employees at yards in Bremen and in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern in eastern Germany whose jobs are at risk.

It filed for protection after attempts to put together a rescue package failed. The European Commission has started investigations into the alleged misuse of state-backed funds totalling DM600 million earmarked for two shipyards in eastern Germany.

Bremer Vulkan's Frankfurt-listed shares nearly halved in value when they resumed trading on Wednesday.

Nadir secretary 'wore £1m ring on flight'

By JON ASHWORTH

A SECRETARY working for Asil Nadir's private financial interests flew from Switzerland to London wearing a ring worth £1 million, a court was told yesterday.

Sharon Marsh, who worked at South Audley Management (SAM), was sent to collect the ring from a bank vault in Zurich, where Mr Nadir had lodged it for safekeeping. Mr Nadir's chauffeur met her at the airport, and she later handed over the ring.

Miss Marsh worked as personal assistant to Elizabeth Forsyth, chairman of SAM,

who is on trial at the Central Criminal Court on charges of handling £307,000 and £88,050 in funds during a week in October 1989. She denies the charges.

The money was allegedly stolen by Mr Nadir from Polly Peck International.

Paul Moretta, Mr Nadir's former chauffeur and bodyguard, told the court that he had paid £88,050 in cash into a bank account in Mayfair. The money was in a briefcase handed to him by Mrs Forsyth in her office in Berkeley Square. The trial continues today.

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STOCK MARKET

MICHAEL CLARK

Imperial sale reports revive Hanson shares

HANSON clawed back some of its recent losses amid mounting speculation that it is close to agreeing terms over the sale of its Imperial Tobacco division.

Lord Hanson's plans to split the group into four received a lukewarm reception from the City. Under the demerger plan, the chemical, energy, tobacco and building materials divisions would be split into four separate companies with their own management.

Talk in the City last night suggested that BAT Industries has made an offer for Imperial Tobacco which, according to analysts, could fetch as much as £2.5 billion. Brokers say a straightforward disposal with no fuss would pump cash back into the business and be less drawn-out than a separate flotation. It would also suit BAT, which has most of its tobacco operation in the US, with only minimal exposure in this country. Brokers say the deal would also help to solve some of BAT's tax problems.

The speculation arose following heavy turnover of Hanson's American Depository Receipts overnight on Wall Street. The equivalent of 35 million shares changed hands. In addition to the 25 million traded in London yesterday, Hanson put on 84p, to end at 190.4p.

Elsewhere, it was another difficult day for both traders and investors. Shares in London experienced another hesitant start despite the strong performance by the Dow Jones average overnight in the US. Prices traded in a narrow band for much of the day, with interest focused on a mixture of trading statements and big speculation. The benefits of another positive start to trading in New York made only minimal impact in London, where the FT-SE 100 index closed 14.4 points higher at 3,740.0.

The move by the National Building Society to cut its mortgage rate for its million borrowers sparked fears of a price war which left the other lenders nursing losses on the day. Abbey National fell 6p to 580p. Bank of Scotland 7p to 277p. Barclays 7p to 792p. Lloyds TSB 4p to 323p. Royal Bank of Scotland also eased 3p to 581p on talk of a profits downgrade by SBC Warburg, the broker.

MAI, the Anglia and Meridian Television group, spent a volatile session, ending 17p



Noel Jarvis of Courtauld Textiles, 8p higher

down on the day at 419p. It briefly touched 470p after a bid by Michael Green's Carlton Communications that it intends to make a bid. Carlton was pressured into making a statement by the Takeover Panel to put an end to recent intense speculation within the Square Mile. Earlier this month, MAI unveiled

Lopex formed another 1p to 194p having risen from 13p during the past two weeks. A line of two million shares that had been overhanging has now been placed. Results next month are expected to show pre-tax profits about £2 million, compared with £520,000 last time after a £2 million goodwill write-off.

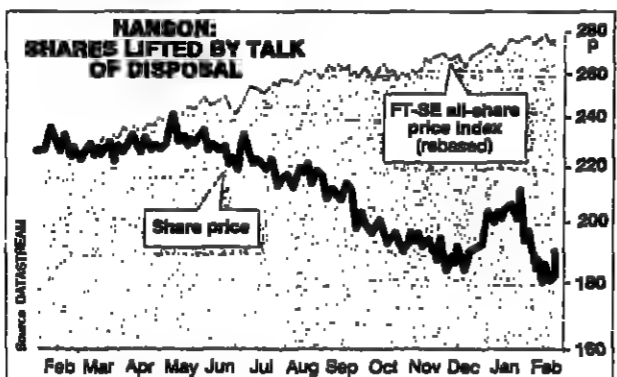
details of a proposed £2.9 billion merger with United News & Media, publisher of the Daily Express.

Speculators immediately switched to Mirror Group, where the price responded with a rise of 3p to 224p. The market is convinced that Carlton wishes to expand its media interests. Reports claim that it has secured a £2 billion

bank facility and is on the lookout for a new financial adviser.

Scottish Television was down 13p at 696p and HTV Group 7p off at 388p. Carlton tumbled 22p at one stage, before rallying after the announcement to finish 7p better at £10.13.

BET was 1p firmer at 196.3p



HANSON: SHARES LIFTED BY TALK OF DISPOSAL

FT-SE 100 all-share price index (base 100)

Share price

Feb Mar Apr May Jun Jul Aug Sep Oct Nov Dec Jan Feb

100 200 300 400 500 600 700 800 900 1000

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boards advertising group, jumped 1p to 525p. Panmure Gordon, the broker, is expected to publish a buy recommendation later today.

A drop in full year profits and further controversy over its directors' pay left British Gas nursing a fall of 3 1/2p at 236 1/2p.

Richard Giordano, chairman, only added to the gloom by warning that he expects the group to be referred to the Monopolies & Mergers Commission once Ofgas, the industry regulator, publishes its Transco review in the spring.

Full-year figures from ICI came in at the bottom end of expectations, but the group was able to reassure brokers about prospects. Pre-tax profits for the full year grew from 1994's depressed £408 million to £927 million. The shares finished 25p dearer at 857p after touching 823p.

Full-year figures from Rank Organisation came in at the top end of expectations despite another saving of its bingo operations by the National Lottery. The shares closed 15p up at 479p.

A disappointing second-half performance took its toll on full-year figures from Courtauld Textiles, where Noel Jarvis is chief executive. But the £7 million slide in pre-tax profits to £40 million was no worse than the market had envisaged and the shares finished 8p better at 408p.

■ GILT-EDGED: Late falls were recorded, with dealers worried that this morning's Industrial Trends Survey will show a sharp rise in output. Despite the news of Nationwide's cut in its mortgage rate, prices closed near their low of the day.

Other gilts reported switching out of gilts and into German bunds. The only sector to resist the downward pull was index-linked, where prices at the longer end climbed 1/2p.

In the futures pit, the March series of the Long Gilt fell 1 1/2p to £107 1/2, as the number of contracts completed totalled 77,000.

In the cash market, Treasury 8 per cent 2015 fell 1/2p to 89p, while in shorts Treasury 8 per cent 2000 eased three ticks to £103 1/2.

■ NEW YORK: Shares on Wall Street saw further gains on the prospect of lower interest rates. By midday the Dow Jones Industrial average was 31.79 points higher at 5,547.76.

MAJOR INDICES

New York (midday): Dow Jones 5547.76 (+31.79) S&P Composite 652.35 (+4.25)

Tokyo: Nikkei Average 2040.94 (+31.29)

Hong Kong: Hang Seng 11338.45 (+250.54)

Amsterdam: AEX Index 507.50 (+3.56)

Sydney: All Ordinaries 2254.1 (+15.9)

Frankfurt: DAX 2412.00 (+20.88)

Singapore: Straits 2454.81 (+0.93)

Brussels: CAC 40 856.98 (+92.43)

Paris: CAC 40 1953.26 (+16.38)

Zurich: SMI 725.00 (+0.83)

London: FT 30 2761.5 (+30.5)

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FT 250 2730.0 (+14.7)

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TEMPLES

ICI's asset formula

WITH scores of management consultants prowling around ICI's Millbank headquarters, it is scarcely surprising that the bosses are now seducing shareholders with talk of the "value gap initiative". Jargon aside, the main question facing ICI investors is not the cost-cutting programme, but whether the company can find acquisitions or capital projects that deliver returns above its hurdle rate of 20 per cent.

Price recovery gave ICI a good year, but yesterday's figures also gave credence to the company's claim that streamlining the product lines has left it less exposed to the chemicals cycle. Even after the slowdown and destocking in the fourth quarter, the company managed gains in volume, price and profits. ICI is confident that the current cycle has yet to peak, but the company knows it cannot

rely on prices to deliver its target rate of return. Yesterday, the company acknowledged that it was making inefficient use of its assets and posed itself the challenge of gearing the balance sheet more aggressively. But if ICI is to achieve a long-running 20 per cent return from its assets, it should be earning some 25-30 per cent at peak performance, a rate far removed from last year's 18 per cent.

If it was easy to find businesses or projects capable of delivering such growth, ICI would not now be blushing about its inefficient use of capital. Gearing up today means investing as the cycle peaks, a strategy that leaves it exposed to inflated prices. The alternative is the return of capital to shareholders. If ICI can solve its asset problem, shareholders might prefer the latter route.

Rank

DEMERGER is the fashion and it was inevitable that questions would be asked about Rank Organisation. The lumbering giant owns assets that are loosely labelled leisure businesses, but it is hard to see the link between the glamorous film and television interests and the more prosaic bingo clubs and Butlins.

It is hoped that Andrew Teare, the incoming chief executive, will put some zip back into the company, if somewhat sluggish. But demerger is unlikely to be the immediate way forward. Rank is hampered by its remaining 20 per cent stake in Rank Xerox, a sale would result in a hefty forward tax bill and even a retrospective bill for last year's partial sale. Another concern is Rank's over-reliance on Xerox profits, a company over which it has limited control. Xerox already supplies 45 per cent of the group's earnings; placing it with one division would result in the other businesses being dwarfed.

British Gas

BRITISH GAS is flailing about looking for a weapon with which to strike its enemies and has found the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. Poor old BG, first cold-shouldered by the oil companies who were unimpressed by its cries over take-or-pay contracts. Then the Government, too, gave it a snub by refusing to convene a consumer levy. With an election looming, ministers are not keen to be seen supporting an unpopular management. And finally, Ofgas, the tormentor, wants to give more of BG's precious cash to the consumer.

BG's answer is to refer everything to the MMC. Referral of the future pricing formula for Transco looked inevitable but BG now wants to dump the take-or-pay problem in the lap of the competition authorities.

The MMC, a body whose job is to support fair competition, will be faced with a

confusing task, should it be foolish enough to take it on. Even BG agrees the take-or-pay contracts were freely entered into and the only monopoly in town at the time was the British Gas, not the oil companies.

BG's tactics look dilatory and lengthy MMC inquiries will do nothing to help shareholders take a view on Transco's dividend prospects. These look increasingly weak without the cash from Moroccan Bay. Transco will have a hard job satisfying shareholders and developing its business. The likely outcome is less dividend or cut-backs in exploration, and probably both.

IF CARNIVAL Corporation is just interested in selling more cruise holidays in the UK it could have saved itself £100 million. Airtours needs a boost to its business and a marketing link between the

two operators could doubtless be achieved without the cement of a shareholding. Airtours has been scouring North America for companies to fill the loss-making winter season with profitable business. Filling seats on its winter flights to Miami with passengers destined for Carnival cruise ships could transform a slim £20 profit per passenger into £100.

The share subscription will repair Airtours's balance sheet, eroded by goodwill written-off from acquisition and fill its coffers with cash for more deals. However, it is difficult to see where Carnival gains from this deal. Current bookings for Airtours's summer season suggest another good year with rampant discounting in store. If Carnival is to avoid seeing its cash financing unprofitable holidays in Malaga, it will need to take a firm hand. That suggests the one-year standstill on share purchases

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COMMODITIES

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Jul 96 1011.00

Dec 96 1011.00

THE
TIMES



CITY
DIARY

NPI post for Hogg

NUMBER cruncher Sarah Hogg, director of London Economics, has at last given into desperate pleas from pension providers: NPI to join them as a non-executive director. The NPI was chuffed to announce her appointment yesterday, because, in the 1980s, they tried when she went to work for the Government, but the lady graciously declined.

Baroness Hogg has already attended her first NPI board meeting, sitting next to fellow non-exec John Carter, chief executive of Hepworth. Baroness Hogg, a journalist who was head of the Prime Minister's Policy Unit until last year, enthused about her new post. "It's a very interesting time to join when the pensions industry is going through such a tremendous amount of change."

I do hope she enjoys the NPI, because, when I first inquired about what non-execs are paid, I was told between £3,000 and £5,000 a year. Ten minutes later, the NPI phoned with a correction: "In fact, it's £15,000 a year — coconuts, not peanuts."

Toon to City

SIR John Hall, who becomes a non-executive director of the Bank of England on March 1, may have wondered just where he was yesterday while being shown around NatWest Markets' trading floor in Bishopsgate by his old chum Derek Wandless. NatWest's group chief executive, Joe Lafferty, managing director of equities and in charge of 400 traders, arranged a special welcome for his boss and Sir John. After all, Sir John has been chairman of Newcastle United FC — the Toon — since 1992, and Wandless is a known Newcastle fan. So Joe, a dedicated Celtic supporter, encouraged equity salesmen to don football shirts in honour of the visit. The majority of traders obliged, and only a handful ignored Joe's one command: "No Rangers colours."



"I hear that they've linked up with a cruise ship operator."

Toast to cruise

SIMON KESWICK has at last found a reward for Hongkong Land's so-far disastrous stake in Trafalgar House, the cruise and engineering conglomerate. After Trafalgar House's annual meeting yesterday, a shareholder stood up to congratulate Keswick and the board on "the success so far of this year's QEZ round-the-world cruise". The shareholder's 80-year-old father is on the cruise and showed his appreciation with a crate of champagne, duly presented to Keswick. One hopes the QEZ now makes it back to Southampton successfully in April.

Napoleon call

TOUCHY lot, as English. At the first European Growth Company conference at Hotel George V, Paris, the 300-odd delegates yesterday found themselves split between two rooms. All the Brits, it seems, were put into Salon Napoleon, encouraging Andrew Beeson, of brokers Beeson Gregory, to quip: "I've just come down from Waterloo, but this is taking things a bit far."

COLIN CAMPBELL

Single-market wrangles bode ill for monetary union

Dreams of a
new currency
leave trade
neglected, says

Janet Bush

It is a continent-sized case of the chicken and the egg. Is the single European market the necessary prerequisite for monetary union? Or is an effective monetary union necessary for successful implementation of the single market?

These are exceedingly important questions, but Europe's political leaders have become so obsessed with the machismo of a single currency, and whether they will make the grade on deadline, that the original grand vision of a huge, open market for trade and people is being dangerously neglected.

As the inter-governmental conference approaches, all the rhetorical power of the European Union's politicians is being used to discuss the single currency. We must meet the 1999 deadline for monetary union versus we must delay. We must stick to the letter of the Maastricht economic convergence criteria versus we must relax the criteria to ensure that enough countries can join the single currency. And, in the ultimate piece of political brinkmanship, Helmut Kohl, Germany's Chancellor, has gone so far as to suggest that the collapse of the single currency project could mean war in Europe.

The importance of the single market, embodying the four freedoms of movement in goods, services, labour and capital, is being overlooked in the scramble for monetary union. This makes little sense to, among others, Professor Andrew Hughes Hallett, of the University of Strathclyde. The economic dividends of the single market are beyond doubt and the merits of the single currency are deeply arguable, he says. So why is the single market such a poor relation to the single currency?

In the current debate, the Euro-skeptics would argue that the single market does not need the same focus as monetary union because so much progress has been made. This is only partly so. There has been extraordinary integration of markets in goods, with the share of intra-EC trade in gross domestic product nearly tripling between 1960 and 1990, according to the London-based Centre for Economic Policy Research. However, integration of services has been much slower, although there is increasing liberalisation in financial services.

The picture on capital mobility is ambiguous. Although almost all capital controls have now been removed and financial markets fully integrated, internal foreign direct investment has remained low. This, though, is beginning to change. Witness the intra-European corporate takeovers of recent months. Mobility of labour continues to be a very difficult issue.

In purely numerical terms, the European Commission reported that, by the end of 1994, 92 per cent of measures required to implement the single market had been adopted by the 12 countries then members of the European Union. However, implementation varied significantly between them, reaching 98 per cent in Denmark but only 86 per cent in Greece. As a result, the number of directives adopted correctly by all 12 was 156 out of a total 219, or about 71 per cent.

This, it could be argued, is



While Jacques Chirac and Helmut Kohl build monetary union, the realities of global competition bear down on them

not at all bad going, but Euro-cynics believe that the single market is running into trouble. Stalled and failing negotiations in a number of areas highlight the national defensiveness, self-interest, ego and ideological divides that run throughout Europe but are virtually banned in debate on monetary union.

Monetary union is the plying of politicians determined to bind Germany to peaceful coexistence or to harness its economic power to the collective good of Europe. Such strategic desires brook no opposition, and we are all encouraged to wander in this fantastical secret garden unquestioningly. However, the single market is all about economics, real issues of market share, competitiveness, companies and consumers. Debate about

workers, one of the four pillars of the single market. There have been seven years of deadlock on liberalising Europe's energy markets. Christine Papoutsis, commissioner for energy, says that if there is no agreement by June, he will refer the question back to heads of government to decide whether they want a single market in energy.

Old and fiercely held political views inconsistent with a free European market are being applied. In the case of pensions, many European countries believe domestic savings "belong" to the nation and should stay there. On energy, France has made clear that its utilities are a public service. Any suggestion that some parts of France could buy cheaper electricity from Germany runs counter to a promise to the

Europe's aim of using economies of scale within the continent to compete more successfully in the world is in danger of falling as European partners jockey for position among themselves.

So, back to the chicken and the egg. There is an implication for monetary union in the single market's teething troubles. The Maastricht convergence criteria on debt, deficits and inflation are necessary, but so too are a level playing field for business, true mobility of labour and absolute enforcement against protectionism. There needs to be more time to make the nuts and bolts of the single market work and to allow countries to meet the convergence criteria to build a new Europe that brings economic benefits.

Andrew Duff, director of the Federal Trust, believes, however, that the collective discipline asserted by the Maastricht timetable for monetary union is the glue keeping the single market together. France and Germany, he said, have moved far towards accepting a more Anglo-Saxon approach to liberalising markets because of their ultimate desire to see monetary union.

Without this goal, he believes, Europe would soon return to protectionism and assertion of national interests. "The pragmatic, free market free-for-all advocated by the British government is baloney," he argues.

However, is it not conceivable — even probable — that the single market would continue to be built, even if the artificial political timetable for monetary union were postponed or shelved? This, needless to say, would be the best possible outcome for John Major.

The same pressures of the global economy, which were a catalyst for the single market

Dirigism and national interest are elevated above the good of Europe

this process lacks a convenient vagueness of vision.

Professor Hughes Hallett notes that the attitude towards monetary union, the most fundamental and irreversible change in how Europe runs itself, is one of do it and work out the details afterwards. In contrast, the single market has been researched, he says, in crushing boring detail.

It is the detail that is coming unstuck, perhaps another reason why the single market does not figure large in the current debate. Earlier this month, the European Commission put off for at least six months a decision on legislation that would ensure that employees working across European borders can take their company pension rights with them. This is critical to ensuring the free movement of

French people of a universal standard of service.

Far from moving towards a level playing field for Europe's airline businesses, Neil Kinloch, commissioner for transport, has allowed Spain to prop up Iberia to the tune of £40 million and hinted that the airline can have another £100 million next year. In telecommunications, Deutsche Telekom will be privatised but not split into competing parts, although the failure to break up British Telecom is now seen as the cardinal error of that privatisation.

It is clear that lingering dirigism, defensiveness about competition and national interest are being elevated above the good of Europe as a whole and risk putting European companies at a disadvantage as competitors in the rest of the world rush for globalisation.

Angry Japanese home in on big loan scandal

Peregrine Hodson reports on demands
for radical finance ministry reforms

Police in riot gear stand guard outside the finance ministry in Tokyo. Reinforcements wait in buses near by. The MoF, the single most powerful institution in Japan, architect of the country's development from postwar poverty to economic superpower, is quaking in its collective shoes. What threat are the police expecting? A policeman there cannot say. "We've been sent here in case there's trouble, that's all I know."

For years, the MoF has been a law unto itself, a centre of unashamed elitism attracting the top graduates from the nation's most prestigious universities. The MoF bureaucrats have immense power, which they exercise by "administrative guidance" over four key areas of the economy: taxation, banking and finance, state assets, and the budget.

Now, after four years of recession, the ministry's reputation for infallibility has been destroyed and a string of financial scandals, notably the Daiwa Bank debacle in the US and tax evasion by a senior MoF official, have provoked widespread demands for radical reform of its workings. The greatest cause of public outrage is the

Rumours
proliferate
of crime
syndicate
involvement

¥10,000 yen for every taxpayer in Japan. Many believe the final cost will be double that.

Last December, amid rumours of the loan problem, foreign bankers, demanded extra interest on Japanese banks' borrowings in international markets. The MoF must solve the housing loan crisis as soon as possible, before the problem worsens and jeopardises Japan's financial system. But realising the remaining value of the mortgage lenders and banks' property collateral will depress property prices further. Rumours proliferate that members of Japan's yakuza crime syndicate are heavily involved in the housing loan mess. Raisuake Miyawaki, formerly of the national police agency, says: "Getting rid of bad loans by tinkering with accounting methods could lead to financial domination by the crime syndicates — to a mafia-controlled economy." Typically, the yakuza prevent the sale of collateral properties by moving into buildings until they are paid off.

They are also adept at taking advantage of Japan's property laws, which favour tenants' rights over those of the leaseholder or freeholder. Raisuake

Japanese Government's decision to use ¥685 billion (£4.6 billion) of taxpayers' money to liquidate a group of seven housing loan corporations known as *jusen*.

At the height of Japan's economic bubble, the MoF sanctioned loans by banks to the corporations. These, in turn, made loans to property developers. Now property values have plunged, in some cases to less than a third of 1990 valuations. Developers have been wiped out, nearly all the *jusen* mortgage lenders' loans have soured, and selling the collateral attached to them would realise less than a quarter of what the *jusen* owe.

Of the total of ¥4.4 trillion in outstanding loans to the top 50 borrowers at each of the seven *jusen* companies, 95 per cent are non-performing. It is clear now that the MoF knew in 1991 that many of the loans, even then, were irrecoverable. Action then would have reduced the number and size of the bad loans. The public money to be used to liquidate the *jusen* amounts to

Miyawaki believes the nation's financial institutions are severely compromised by *yakuza* influence.

During the bubble economy, the *yakuza* co-opted banking officials, co-in property deals. Now the banks are being forced to call in loans, the *yakuza* are resisting with threats of blackmail and intimidation.

The loan crisis — a result of the MoF's complacency, or incompetence, and gangster profiteering hit a raw nerve with the public, who see no reason why they should subsidise organised crime.

The Government now seems tentatively to be facing up to the loans crisis and its implications. Officials said that a working group would consider legislation to prevent the *yakuza* from obstructing the recovery of delinquent loans. Unless urgent measures are taken Japan's financial institutions, according to Raisuake Miyawaki, will become dominated by *yakuza* interests, and that would be the final catastrophe.

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and Futures Authority Limited

23 February 1996

Work in the public sector accounts for high earnings

From Mr Jonathan Chaytor
Sir, As a chartered accountant in a small practice in the little market town of Ormskirk, I cannot say that I have been under-rewarded during the past 30 years although, thanks to the Financial Services Act and Institute rules, the past three years have not been as

good. I am not complaining. As regards the earnings at some international firms, I think they have been very well rewarded and they would not have achieved such earnings other than by work in the public sector. By that I mean quoted companies, privatisations, etc.

Some years ago, in leading accountancy journals, I questioned auditors' fees. In brief, I stated: "There was a marked difference in the approach between public companies' finance directors and those from the more prosperous private companies."

"Audit fee increases tend to slide through more easily because a public company is not spending proprietors' money but shareholders'."

If you accept the foregoing then the fees charged are excessive. Apart from the fees,

limited liability must also be questioned. If they did the work properly in the first place they would have nothing to fear.

With earnings as reported I cannot believe that the present litigation outstanding fairly a small amount of which will go against them) will only cause a minor ripple in their cashflow or perhaps a little dent in their capital.

Over the years they have used the Taxes Act with the precision of the finest chronometer to have partnership changes to lessen on their tax liabilities. The law of the land should not have been changed to allow them to renege on their liabilities.

Yours faithfully,
JONATHAN CHAYTOR,
Chaytor, Steele & Co,
9 Derby Street,
Ormskirk, Lancashire.

Names settling for best offer

From Mr Dennis Franklin
and others:

Sir, I cannot say how Robert Miller can say that Lloyds names are set to reject the offer (February 13). Many have not yet seen the document. The usual critics of Lloyds have made their predictable response in advance of publication. We names are too painfully aware of the problems at Lloyds, but blaming the past does not solve the problems. The best settlement offer needs to succeed; the alternative is too awful to contemplate.

Yours faithfully,
DENNIS FRANKLIN,
ROBERT WILSON,
MARGARET KNIGHT,
JOAN KELLNER-STEVENS,
BRYAN DUFFIELD,
LAURIE EDWARDS,
Cross Lanes, Mapledurham,
Reading, Berkshire.

STOCK MARKET



MICHAEL CLARK

Greenspan gives shares a push with rates forecast

AN OPENING surge on Wall Street in both equities and US Treasury bonds helped London to shake off its earlier blues and end the day on a positive note. The FT-SE 100 index staged a 37-point turnaround to close 11 points higher at 3,725.6 as a total of 710 million shares changed hands.

Alan Greenspan, chairman of the Federal Reserve, came to the rescue of financial markets on both sides of the Atlantic with some soothing words about the US economy that raised hopes of an early cut in prime rates. He said that if further progress was made in the direction of a balanced budget, it would lead to a significant drop in long-term interest rates.

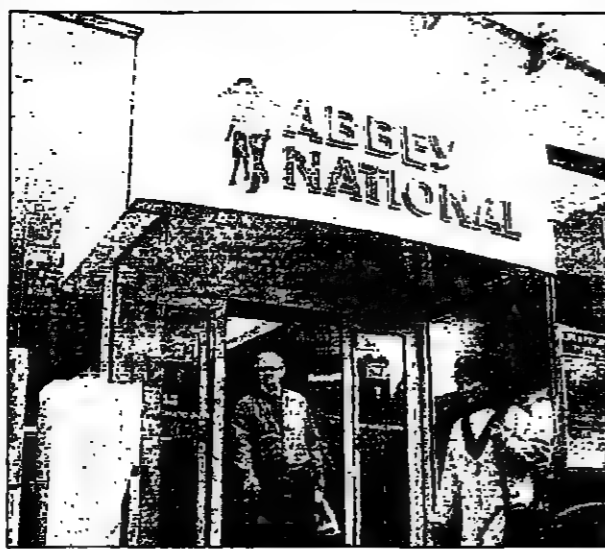
His views revived hopes in London that there is still scope for the Bank of England to make another early cut in base rates.

On the takeover front, Lloyds Chemists firmed up to 49p as the battle for control intensified, with GEHE raising the terms of its original offer and UniChem snapping up 3.6 per cent of the company in a dawn raid on the shares. It followed the move by GEHE, the German pharmaceutical distributor, to increase the terms of its offer by 50p to 500p a share. The new terms value Lloyds Chemists at almost £650 million.

UniChem responded by sending brokers BZW and UBS into the market-place to snap up stock at 497p a share, raising its stake in the company to almost 10 per cent. UniChem said its acquisition of Lloyds would enhance earnings. By the close of business more than 30 million Lloyds shares had changed hands. UniChem finished 7p better at 249p.

The speculators were out in force at House of Fraser (Hof), the Army & Navy and Dickins & Jones stores group, as the price climbed 1p to 188p on turnover of two million shares. The shares hit a low of 163p last month after the group issued a profits warning. Despite the recent rally, the Hof share price has failed to live up to expectations and may prove vulnerable to a bid approach.

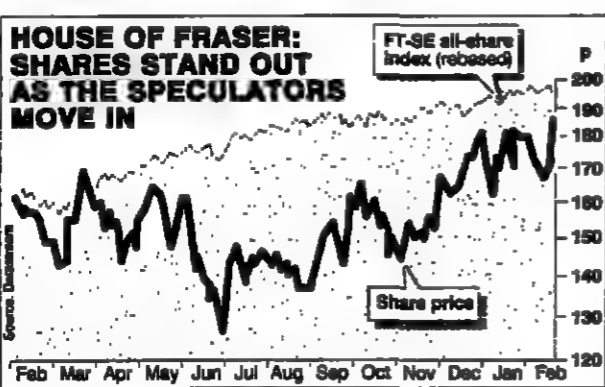
Brokers say Sears, unchanged at 95p, would have the financial muscle to make such a move, but the Selfridges stores group has problems of its own which it may wish to



Abbey National shares fell 7p on large turnover

sort out first. A profits warning sent shares of Wagon Industrial tumbling 32p to 389p. The engineer said that underlying pre-tax profits for the year to March 1996 were likely to fall short of market expectations, currently pitched at about £25.3 million. It blamed lack of demand and problems with integrating acquisitions. De-

overseas operations accounted for 61 per cent of overall operating results. CU's performance focused attention on the rest of the insurance sector ahead of what is now expected to be an encouraging dividend season. Top of fund managers' lists was Royal Insurance, up 12p at 386p ahead of figures out soon. Guardian Royal Ex-



HOUSE OF FRASER: SHARES STAND OUT AS THE SPECULATORS MOVE IN

Tuesday's profits news and this week's £460 million acquisition of Gartmore, stood out with a rise of 17p to 701p. Royal Bank of Scotland, the takeover favourite, added 7p to 54p, and Standard Chartered 4p to 603p.

VideoLogic, the multi-media specialist, firmed up to 78p after it was signalled that the shares had become a "chart breakout" and a buy.

MAI grew 5p to 436p after the rumoured bid from Michael Green's Carlton Communications failed to materialise. But the City is convinced that Carlton is poised to make a move soon, although its target may not necessarily be MAI. Others in the frame include United News & Media, publisher of the Daily Express, which is ready to merge itself with MAI, 1p lighter at 641p. Mirror Group, unchanged at 221p, and Scottish Television, steady at 709p. Carlton ended the day down 8p at £10.06.

Intersecare, the headline group, firmed another 2p to 64p, drawing encouragement from news of this week's boardroom reshuffle. Shareholders at Tuesday's annual meeting were told that Ken Harvey had been appointed non-executive chairman and Jeremy Earnshaw group finance director.

GLT-EDGED: A weaker than expected set of January retail sales and the encouraging outlook for US interest rates saw prices in London shake off an early fall to close substantially higher on the day. The long end of the market recorded gains of more than 1p.

Traders are now planning their hopes on an early cut in US interest rates. They take the view that there is scope for a softening of rates over here. In the futures pit, the March series of the long gilt made up early loss ground to finish £11.16 up on the day at £107.73 in another day of heavy turnover that saw 92,000 contracts completed.

Treasury 8 per cent 2015 climbed £1.32 to 599.17, while at the shorter end Treasury 8 per cent 2000 was £1.60 better at £103.92. NEW YORK: Shares on Wall Street rebounded in response to the second day of congressional testimony by Alan Greenspan, chairman of the Federal Reserve. By midday the Dow Jones industrial average was \$5.63 points higher at 5,514.16.

MAJOR INDICES

New York (midday):	
Dow Jones	5514.16 (+55.63)
S&P Composite	950.62 (+6.00)
Tokyo:	
Nikkei Average	20872.33 (+263.44)
Hong Kong:	
Hang Seng	Closed
Amsterdam:	
Euro Stoxx	503.94 (+4.27)
Sydney:	
ASX	2238.12 (+7.3)
Frankfurt:	
DAX	2391.12 (+8.51)
Singapore:	
Straits	Closed
Brussels:	
General	3470.55 (+18.54)
Paris:	
CAC-40	1926.90 (+1.54)
Zurich:	
SEA Gen	724.10 (+1.30)
London:	
FT 100	3725.6 (+37.5)
FT 100 Ind	3725.6 (+37.5)
FT 100 Div	1660.2 (+4.7)
FT 100 Net	1521.59 (+10.65)
FT 100 All-Share	1836.15 (+4.00)
FT 100 Financials	1836.15 (+4.00)
FT 100 Industrials	1122.27 (+3.85)
FT 100 Services	924.63 (+1.30)
Bulgaria	710.30
SEAD Volume	203.18 (+0.65)
USM (Chatham)	1.5448 (+0.0003)
USM	1.5448 (+0.0003)
German Mark	2.2418 (+0.0009)
Exchange Index	83.7 (+0.3)
Bank of England official close (Mps)	1.1883
ECU	1.6666
1993 Jan 2.994 Jan 1997-100	
1993 Jan 2.994 Jan 1997-100	

RECENT ISSUES

BZW Eq (Brnd) A	283
Ballymore	3
Clubhaus (TS)	7
Clubhaus Wts	3
Draht	70
Ex-Lands Pros (TS)	13
Ex-Lands Wts	8
Mediatech	6
Nihon Puri Wts	5
Optical Care (S)	6
Ormonde Mining	12
Revelation Pys	105
Self Sealing Sys (S)	51
Shire Pharma (TS)	229
Spherpharma Wts	8

RIGHTS ISSUES

Ashtead n/p (153)	16
Br Borneo n/p (310)	119
Farm Fin Ut n/p (540)	72
Innovative T n/p (70)	26
Lookers n/p (125)	

MAJOR CHANGES

REES:	
Eve Group	143p (+10p)
Flare	161p (+11p)
House of Fraser	188p (+11p)
Arjo Wiggins	207p (+10p)
Royal	355p (+12p)
London & Men	382p (+12p)
Unitech	537p (+16p)
Regent Inns	840p (+23p)
Commercial Union	614p (+16p)
Courtaulds	429p (+11p)
BAT	573p (+13p)
P&O	550p (+10p)
Nat West	701p (+17p)
FALLS:	
Wagon Ind	389p (-32p)
Shaw	280p (-20p)
Forward Group	705p (-15p)
My Kinda Town	125p (-4p)
Frost Group	133p (-3p)
Medeva	226p (-11p)
Aus New Zealand	296p (-11p)
Valeo	340p (-12p)
Alcoa	340p (-12p)
Powell Duffryn	434p (-12p)
Nat Aust Bank	581p (-16p)

Closing Prices Page 25

Chemists mix love potions

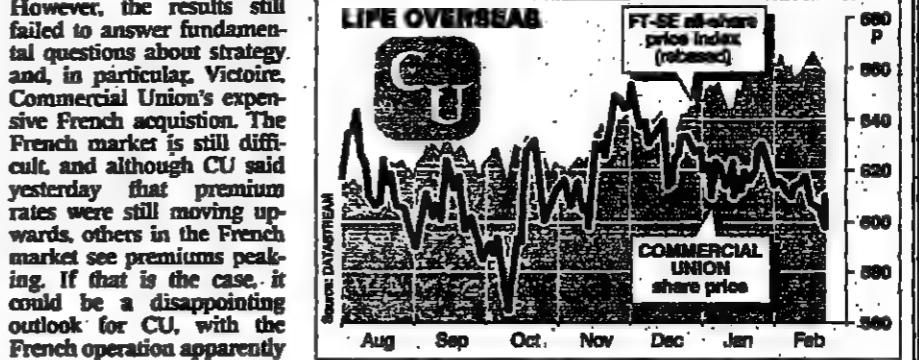
IN THE February of a leap year, Lloyds Chemists' shareholders have the pleasant dilemma of choosing between two rival suitors.

On the face of it there is not much to distinguish between the two. Gehe, the ambitious and wealthy German, has made an increased — but not final — offer of £650 million, marginally ahead of a rival offer from UniChem. Ironically, it was yesterday's increased offer from Gehe which helped lift the value of UniChem's bid, raising the price of its shares. Gehe's allure is that its offer is all cash, compared to UniChem's cash and share mix. Shareholders dithering over accepting Gehe's cash need to decide whether an enlarged UniChem will offer better growth.

Both bidders agree there would be considerable cost savings in a marriage of UniChem

and Lloyds Chemists, but Gehe has cast doubt on UniChem's claim that most of the gains — reckoned to be £25 million — would come in the first year. The German company reckons that full integration will take several years, a prospect that would dampen investor enthusiasm for the deal. Fear of dilution has depressed the UniChem share price and, notwithstanding the commercial and strategic logic of the deal, there is a question mark over the stock's future performance.

There is a worry that UniChem will lose a commercial advantage to Gehe if the latter wins Lloyds, but the German has been slow to achieve much progress with its last UK acquisition. In the circumstances, the Gehe cash looks more appealing; alternatively investors can sell in the market and buy a resurgent UniChem.



LIFE OVERSEAS

still experiencing weak underwriting margins. Meanwhile, CU has demonstrated that it has played the insurance cycle well in the UK, with only a slight reduction in profit in spite of increased competition and a rise in claims from burst pipes. CU increased its motor-related business aggressively early in the cycle

and over the past year has been trimming its exposure as rates have weakened.

CU is best seen as a portfolio of insurance businesses in different markets, but investors might have preferred a more focused strategy that avoided the huge goodwill written off from Victrola, which has still to prove its worth.

cent, but with the cost of capital in the oil industry of about 12 per cent, it is not as impressive target, even less so when other major oil companies are achieving 15 per cent. With the chemicals cycle past its peak, Elf needs success upstream to improve its share price and past performance gives little confidence.

My Kinda Town

WITH new restaurants opening on every corner, results from My Kinda Town were a useful reminder that the trade is vulnerable to shocks. The company's French business was decimated by French strikes and terrorist attacks, leaving profits unchanged despite growth in the UK and Germany.

The return of terrorist bombs in London must be a concern to the company, although restaurateurs claim that because a smaller proportion of their trade is tour-

ist-related, they are less exposed than hoteliers. The argument suggests that after a brief interval, suburbanites will not be deterred from their night on the town.

For investors, the greater concern is the huge increase in restaurant capacity, recently accelerated by the fashion for the 200-plus seat venues. My Kinda Town's contract to run the Capital Radio restaurant at Leicester Square pits the firm against nearby Planet Hollywood and the planned Fashion Cafe; while in Covent Garden bids are being made for a restaurant site with a capacity for over 600 covers.

With huge fitting-out costs, investors need to be confident that the theme will last more than five years and My Kinda Town is sensibly not putting capital into the radio restaurant. In the end, the landlords may be the big winners in the restaurant craze.

EDITED BY CARL MORTIMER

COMMODITIES

LONDON COMMODITY EXCHANGE			
COCOA			
Mar	997.00	1012.00	
May	998.10	1013.00	unq
Jul	1000.90		
Sep	1003.90		
Dec	1007.00		
Volume	417		
ROBUSTA COFFEE (F)			
Mar	3125.30	Nov	1904.180
May	1945.480	Jan	1825.480
Jul	1950.000	Mar	1820.180
Sep	1959.180	May	1806.374
WHITE SUGAR (FOB)			
Mar	316.10	Dec	314.10
May	316.00	Jan	310.40
Jul	320.80	Mar	300.60
Sep	320.80	Apr	300.40
Oct	325.125	Volume	922
MEAT & LIVESTOCK COMMODITIES			
Average livestock prices at representative markets on February 20			
kg/lb	Price	Change	Cattle
100	105.12	120	110
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100	105.12	120	110
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100	105.12	120	110
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LONDON FINANCIAL FUTURES

	Period	Open	High	Low	Sett	Vol
FTSE 100	Mar 96	3740.0	3740.0	3740.0	3721.0	12194
Previous open interest: 64211	Jun 96	3960.0	3716.5	3900.0	3728.5	23018
FTSE 250	Mar 96					
Previous open interest: 2311	Jun 96				4180.0	0
Three Month Sterling	Mar 96	92.77	92.89	92.77	92.88	94923
Previous open interest: 39088	Jun 96	92.77	92.97	92.50	93.94	54149
	Sep 96	92.64	92.85	92.69	93.81	26285
	Mar 96				94.73	0
Three Mth Eurodollar	Mar 96	96.33	96.59	96.32	96.36	35824
Previous open interest: 109580	Jun 96	96.34	96.60	96.52	96.59	84872
Long Gilt	Mar 96	106.23	106.60	106.23	107.31	30474
Previous open interest: 129676	Jun 96	106.23	107.07	106.00	107.07	428
Japanese Govt Bond	Mar 96	116.57	116.89	116.67	116.80	269
	Jun 96	117.08	117.41	117.18	117.31	2620
German Govt Bond	Mar 96	95.18	95.45	95.15	95.39	21883
Previous open interest: 27804	Jun 96	95.45	95.75	95.44	95.68	31655
Three Month ECU	Mar 96	95.22	95.24	95.12	95.10	191
Previous open interest: 2677	Jun 96	95.24	95.32	95.24	95.28	1284
Euro Swiss Franc	Mar 96	92.08	92.16	92.08	92.15	3952
Previous open interest: 67481	Jun 96	92.09	92.38	92.00	92.40	2822
Italian Govt Bond	Mar 96	107.02	109.10	107.16	108.97	7380
Previous open interest: 4288	Jun 96	107.08	108.41	107.04	108.80	1995

MONEY-RATES (%)	
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MONEY RATES (%)

Commodity	Unit	Price	Change
Base Rate			
Bank of England		5.15	0
Discount Rate		5.15	0
Treasury Bill (3 months)		5.15	0
Treasury Bill (6 months)		5.15	0
Treasury Bill (12 months)		5.15	0
Local Authority Depos		5.15	0
Bank of Scotland		5.15	0
Bank of Ireland		5.15	0
Bank of Wales		5.15	0
Bank of Northern Ireland		5.15	0
Bank of Cyprus		5.15	0
Bank of Greece		5.15	0
Bank of Spain		5.15	0
Bank of Portugal		5.15	0
Bank of France		5.15	0
Bank of Germany		5.15	0
Bank of Italy		5.15	0
Bank of Japan		5.15	0
Bank of Korea		5.15	0
Bank of China		5.15	0
Bank of India		5.15	0
Bank of Australia		5.15	0
Bank of New Zealand		5.15	0
Bank of South Africa		5.15	0
Bank of Argentina		5.15	0
Bank of Brazil		5.15	0
Bank of Mexico		5.15	0
Bank of Colombia		5.15	0
Bank of Venezuela		5.15	0
Bank of Peru		5.15	0
Bank of Ecuador		5.15	0
Bank of Bolivia		5.15	0
Bank of Paraguay		5.15	0
Bank of Uruguay		5.15	0
Bank of Chile		5.15	0
Bank of Cuba		5.15	0
Bank of Haiti		5.15	0
Bank of Dominican Republic		5.15	0
Bank of Guatemala		5.15	0
Bank of Honduras		5.15	0
Bank of Nicaragua		5.15	0
Bank of Costa Rica		5.15	0
Bank of Panama		5.15	0

DTI plan for small firms welcomed

The Confederation of British Industry (CBI) yesterday welcomed government proposals that aim to help struggling small companies to avoid going into receivership.

The Department of Trade and Industry's insolvency service has sent a consultation document to the CBI and various associations asking for their comments. The response so far has been broadly favourable.

Ian Peters, head of the CBI's small and medium enterprise unit, said he was still studying the proposals, but said they were in line with CBI thinking. "We need to look for ways of creating a rescue culture," he said.

The document suggests ways of keeping creditors at bay. A company which is in difficulties and has applied for an administrator could not, as now, be forced into the hands of a receiver by a single creditor unless its own security was at risk.

PF higher

Provident Financial, the Bradford consumer finance group, has increased its dividend by 37 per cent to 28p for 1995, after a decision at the half-year to reduce dividend cover from 2 per cent to 1.75 per cent and an increase in earnings per share of 24 per cent to 50.33p. The final dividend of 17p is due on May 2. Pre-tax profits increased to £101.1 million.

Metalbox falls

Metalbox, the Anglo-French packaging group, suffered a 15 per cent fall in profits. After minority interests they declared to £805 million in 1995, from £950 million, as sales dipped 1.1 per cent to £244.61 billion. Net earnings fell to £14.6 (£11.6) a share. The results are for the last financial year before its absorption by Crown Cork & Seal, the US packaging group.

On target

Heinrich von Plessen, president and chief executive officer of Siemens AG, the German electronics and electrical engineering giant, is sticking to his forecast of 20 to 25 per cent profit growth in the current year to September 30.

Royal Insurance shrugs off rise in weather-related claims

By MARIANNE CURPHEY

SUBSIDENCE. December's freeze and the worst Caribbean hurricanes since 1961, cost Royal Insurance £172 million in weather-related losses in 1995.

In total, worldwide weather claims were up £104 million, to £282 million, for the year ending December 31. This included £34 million in losses from three Caribbean hurricanes, and a doubling of UK weather losses to £136 million.

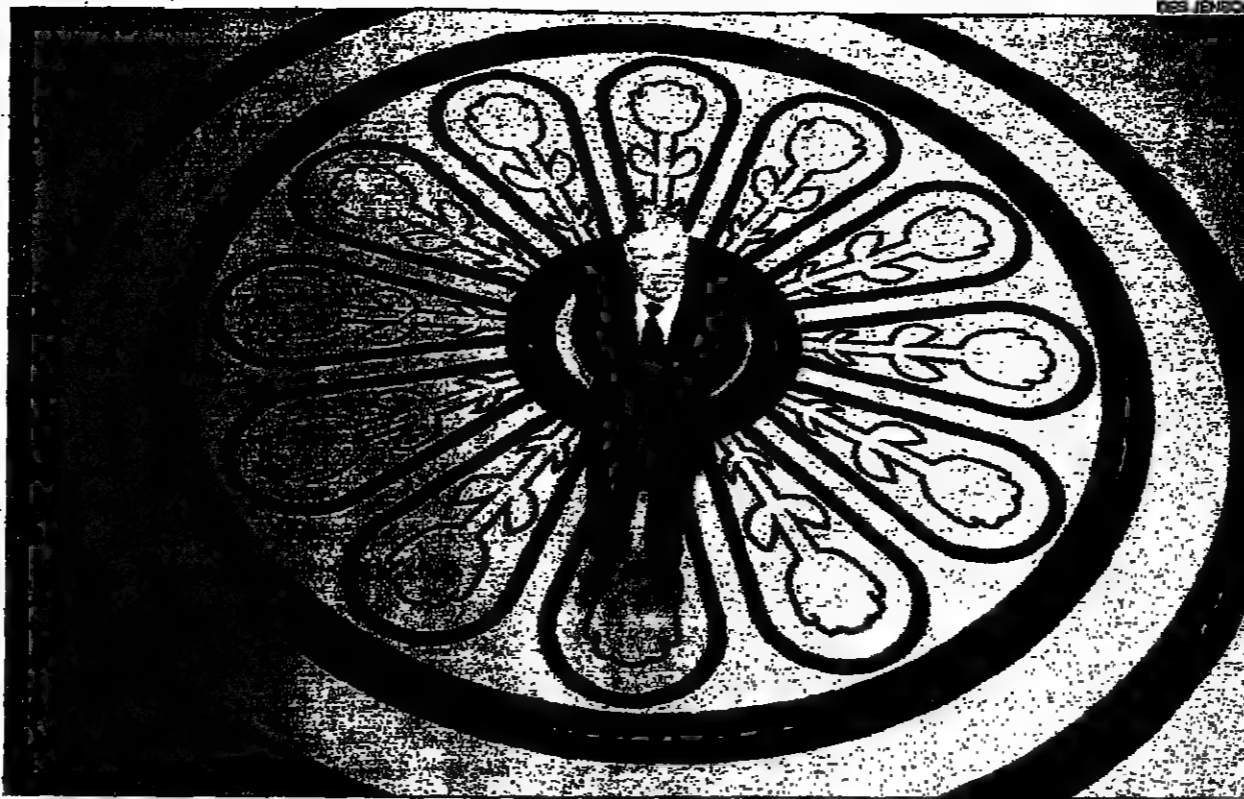
The Royal said that since it writes 20 per cent of premiums in the Caribbean region, it hoped to recoup losses there within two years.

Overall, pre-tax profits for the group rose by £31 million to a record £498 million and the total dividend for the year increased by 4p to 16p.

The results were boosted by a strong performance in the United States, where there was a £63 million improvement in the profit on general business operations, which achieved £72 million. General insurance underwriting in Chile also performed well, producing a £5 million profit.

Worldwide, life business returned a 68 per cent increase in profits to £99 million, although new annual premiums worldwide dropped to £79 million (£99 million in 1994), and new single premiums to £334 million (£459 million).

In the UK, general insurance premiums fell 5 per cent. The Royal said rates had been reduced during the year because there were fewer



Richard Gamble, group chief executive of Royal Insurance, where the focus is on long-term profits growth

claims and more competition, including that from direct insurers. The public's fears over life products hit new single-premium business: the hardest profits in that sector almost halved, from £408 million in 1994 to £220 million last year. Despite a further fall in house sales, the estate agency operation managed, through cost savings, to reduce its

operating loss from £621 million to £18 million.

The company does not expect its losses from the bomb in Docklands, east London, two weeks ago, to reach more than £1 million. Most of the loss, which is currently estimated at between £75 million and £100 million, will be borne by Pool Re, the Government-backed mutual reinsur-

ance company. The Royal's shares rose 1p yesterday to 387p. Analysts said that they were still cheap because the net asset value was currently 406p per share.

The insurer has spent £30 million improving information technology in its offices and has just won a £300 million account from the Halifax to write its household

insurance policies. However, Richard Gamble, group chief executive, said the most important strategy was to protect margins. "Our emphasis is on long-term profits growth," he said. "At no time do we chase market share."

He was interested in expanding the group's life business, but would only buy if the price was right, he added.

Streamline chief's £3.9m bonanza

By ALASDAIR MURRAY

TERRY SIMPSON, chief executive of Streamline, will hold shares worth about £3.9 million when the specialist road and building service company completes a £112 million stock-market flotation at the end of the month.

Streamline is placing 22.2 million shares at 180p with dealings expected to begin on February 29. Mr Simpson holds 950,000 ordinary shares and has options granted at 6.25p on 125,000 other shares. Five other directors will hold shares worth about £1.9 million.

Streamline was formed in 1993 after a buyout, led by Charnhouse Development Capital, of a number of specialist businesses from Shell.

The company will raise about £20 million from the float, which will be used to reduce indebtedness.

Charnhouse will continue to hold a 28.25 per cent stake, with other institutions owning a further 15.25 per cent and the directors holding a total of 14.4 per cent. Streamline said that the institutions had made a commitment not to sell, except to the company's brokers, before April 1997.

Yesterday, Streamline unveiled estimated results for 1995 with profits rising 18 per cent to £15.3 million on a turnover up 13.5 per cent to £157.3 million. The notional gross dividend yield is 5.3 per cent, while earnings per share are estimated at 15.5p.

Courtaulds Textiles profits wilt

COURTAULDS TEXTILES, Britain's second-largest textile group, reported a 23 per cent fall in pre-tax profits to £36.5 million in the year to December 31 (Sarah Bagnall writes).

Stripping out one-off items, profits fell 12 per cent to £40.4 million, broadly in line with City forecasts after a profit warning last Christmas.

The company blamed the downturn on the unusually hot autumn weather and stock problems in France and the US. Noel Jervis, chief executive, said: "After a strong start to the year, the outcome for 1995 was adversely affected by a marked deterioration in the trading environment in the important second half."

The dividend was held at 10.1p for a total of 15p.

Robinson makes plea to Labour

By ROBERT MILLER

ANN ROBINSON, Director-General of the powerful National Association of Pension Funds, whose members look after £350 billion of assets, yesterday called on the Labour Party to "come clean" and spell out what legislation is needed to make its "stakeholder" policy a reality.

Dr Robinson, who was addressing delegates on the second day of the NAPF's investment conference in Eastbourne, said that if the Labour party wanted to encourage wider and deeper share ownership or promote employee share schemes, then the association would be supportive. If, however, the stakeholder policy was meant to diminish the voice and power of share-

holders, then the NAPF would oppose it.

Dr Robinson said there should be a strong contractual relationship between employers and employees with clear obligations on both sides. Employees should be set clear objectives and be rewarded or promoted on achievement "rather than friendship". She added: "The only stakeholder is the shareholder."

John Kay of the National Institute of Economic and Social Research, disagreed with the NAPF line. He told delegates: "Large companies are not owned by their shareholders... The objective of a company should be to develop its business, not to maximise shareholder value."

Lex forecasts cutbacks in car industry as sales fall

By PHILIP FANGALOS

A THIRD of Britain's motor dealerships are likely to disappear during the next five years as the embattled motor industry undergoes a period of retrenchment. Sir Trevor Chinn, chairman of Lex Service, said.

Provisions to enable Lex, Britain's biggest motor dealer, to rationalise its own operations contributed to a 24.3 per cent slump in its full-year profits.

Sir Trevor said demand for new cars remains flat in Britain. "The car industry is in a period of change. Manufacturers will want fewer, larger

dealerships. This has happened in the truck business." He added that manufacturers are using surplus capacity to supply more cars directly to larger fleets and are destabilising the market by discounted sales of nearly new cars.

Sir Trevor's comments came as Lex reported a £9.8 million exceptional charge to cover the cost of selling and closing dealerships, trimming pre-tax profits to £32.1 million in the year to December 31. Turnover, boosted by acquisitions, edged up to £1.56 billion (£1.42 billion). Lex's new car sales fell 5 per cent to 86,000 in 1995.

Sir Trevor said: "While there are no clear signs of recovery in the new car market, all of our businesses have made a promising start to 1996."

The group intends to lessen its dependence on the franchised sale of new cars and concentrate on higher-margin activity in contract hire of cars and trucks. Lex is currently in the process of reducing its dealerships from about 100 to 60 by the end of the first half.

A final dividend of 9p (8.2p), payable on April 10, gives a total of 15p (13.7p) for the year. Shares added 8p to 310p.

Qantas flies higher on the back of cost cutting

FROM RACHEL BRIDGE IN SYDNEY



Pemberton: critical process

QANTAS, Australia's national airline, which made its debut on the Australian stock market six months ago, yesterday confirmed that its A\$1 billion (£500 million) cost-cutting programme was firmly on track as it unveiled a 21.5 per cent increase in half-year operating profits to A\$246.5 million.

The airline, in which British Airways has a 25 per cent stake, said that it had made cost savings of A\$150 million in the half year to December and planned to do the same in the second half.

Its alliance with British

Airways, including a joint services agreement, which started last year, brought in cost savings of A\$40 million.

Gary Pemberton, chairman, said: "The process of reallocating assets to lift productivity and improve profitability is critical in the current competitive environment."

Qantas shares, which were floated on the Australian stock exchange at A\$2.33 on the news, Mr Pemberton said that the airline was on course to make predicted operating profits of A\$400 for the full year to June 1996.

BUSINESS ROUNDUP

Woolwich ahead 10%

WOOLWICH, the UK's third largest building society, increased pre-tax profits 10 per cent last year to £335 million. The society, which plans to pay an average bonus worth £900 to three million savers and borrowers on becoming a stock market company next summer, said the figure included reorganisation costs of £12 million. Peter Robinson, chief executive, said the depressed housing market had led to a fall in mortgage lending to £3.1 billion (£3.3 billion).

Morgan Sindall revival

MORGAN SINDALL, the construction group, yesterday reported pre-tax profits of £3 million for the year to December 31, against a loss of £3.4 million last time. Earnings per share were 8.03p, compared with a loss of 36.58p. There is a final dividend of 1.85p, giving a total dividend of 2.7p. The company attributed the turnaround to its decision to concentrate on office refurbishment and other specialist services.

Admiral boosted by sale

ADMIRAL, the computer services group, yesterday reported pre-tax profits for 1995 up 27 per cent to £9.8 million. This includes an exceptional profit of £2.2 million from the sale of 49 per cent of Powersoft UK. It said turnover was up 32 per cent to £65.5 million while operating profit was up 31 per cent to £7.4 million. The company's directors recommended a final dividend of 6.5p, making a total for the year of 9.4p.

Hotel group plans float

MACDONALD HOTELS yesterday issued a prospectus for its stock market debut and said its pre-tax profit for the year to March 31 should be at least £4.1 million, compared with £3.66 million. The group, which owns 16 three and four-star hotels in the UK and manages 53 others, aims to raise £23.8 million, net of expenses. The offer price will be announced on March 7. Trading is expected to start on March 14.

Trust raises £25m

INTERNATIONAL BIOTECHNOLOGY TRUST, the investment fund managed by Rothschild Asset Management, yesterday raised £25 million through the private placement of 25 million "C" shares, at £1 each, with institutional investors. Another five million "C" shares will be offered to existing IBT investors at the same price. All the shares will convert to ordinary shares once the new funds are 80 per cent invested.

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British industry 'under funded'

By ROBERT MILLER

THE investment record in Britain is depressingly low compared with our major competitors, the deputy governor of the Bank of England told senior fund managers responsible for £350 billion of pension assets.

Howard Davies, formerly the director-general of the Confederation of British Industry, made his remarks yesterday on the opening day of the National Association of Pension Funds (NAPF) three-day investment conference in Eastbourne.

Mr Davies told delegates that not only was investment growth in the UK weaker than when it emerged from the recession in the early 1980s, but that Britain lagged behind its main industrial competitors. He said: "Over a lengthy period we have invested a lower proportion of GDP (gross domestic product) than our main industrial competitors."

He continued: "Over the last 30 years the UK average is around 18 per cent versus 22 per cent for France and Germany and around 30 per cent for Japan. Even the US share of investment has been slightly higher than the UK's."

Even though the economy is growing, Mr Davies added, "The bald figures would suggest that investment growth has been considerably weaker in this recovery than it was a decade ago." The worst aspect, he said, was that commercial construction had "not picked up at all".

Geoff Lindsey, chairman of the NAPF's Investment Committee, strongly defended the investment record of NAPF members. He said: "The problem is not one of institutional investors failing to invest in British companies."

He said that investment in the UK had tended to come from overseas companies. "Take the motor industry," he said. "We have seen huge investments running into billions of pounds in recent years. But where were the British companies?"



Sean O'Connor, chairman of Stoves, left, with John Crathorne, the chief executive, who yesterday unveiled a 13 per cent rise in their pre-tax profits to £1.5 million in the six months to December 2. Sales rose 24 per cent to £27.9 million. The cooker manufacturer is paying a maiden interim dividend of 1.7p out of earnings of 6.1p a share. The shares fell 20p, to 280p, compared with last summer's flotation price of 163p

MPs attack Tecs for 'modest' record on improving training

By PHILIP BASSETT
INDUSTRIAL EDITOR

THE Government's business-led Training and Enterprise Councils have made only a "modest" contribution to improving training in Britain, an influential Commons committee said yesterday.

The all-party Commons Employment Select Committee called for radical changes to the business-dominated boards that run Tecs in Eng-

land and Wales. In a critical report, it said their impact on training has been less than was hoped for, and made clear it was "alarmed" at the measurement of Tecs' performance and the way they spend £1.7 billion of public money.

The findings and recommendations of the committee are only the latest criticism to be made of the Tecs, which were set up five years ago to change the way training is run in the UK. The Nolan

committee on standards in public life is expected shortly to increase pressure on Tecs by also recommending changes to their governing boards to make them more accountable.

Currently, Tecs — described by the committee as private-sector companies with a public role — have more than 750 business leaders on their governing boards, though the MPs said there were "difficulties in reconciling the need for

Government to exercise proper financial controls with the dynamism which Tecs were supposed to bring to the task of local regeneration".

In their report, the MPs concluded that Tecs had made a "modest contribution to the improvement of the system of training for the unemployed, and to the promotion of economic regeneration and enterprise within the local economy", and that "their performance in placing people

in work and gaining qualifications appears to reflect economic conditions, and not to overcome them".

Tecs, the committee said, have a wider problem: "As effectively monopoly contractors with the Government, they are comparatively immune to the competitive discipline of the private sector, and in some cases are slow to win the trust and confidence of local communities."

To overcome this, the committee urged the Government to abandon the founding principle that local business leaders who serve on Tecs' governing boards should be at company chairman and chief executive level. It proposed the Secretary of State appoint one business board member who is not a chairman or chief executive to allow the appointment of executives from larger national companies.

The Tecs' national council welcomed the "balanced and thoughtful" report, though Chris Humphries, policy director, said it could not support all the recommendations.

Zeneca plan to merge seeds business

By PHILIP FANGALOS

ZENECA is in advanced talks to merge Zeneca Seeds with Royal VanderHave of The Netherlands, part of Sulzer Unie, the farming co-operative group, to form a large international seeds joint venture.

The merged company, to be called Zeneca VanderHave, will be 50/50 owned by the groups. It will have annual

sales of about £300 million and be in the top five seeds groups in the world.

Zeneca's 1,500 employees at its agricultural seeds business in Farnham, Surrey, will merge with Royal VanderHave's 1,000 employees to form a new business based at Kapelle in The Netherlands.

An overlap may have an

implication for jobs, although Zeneca Seeds has about only 80 employees in the UK, with the remainder overseas.

The joint venture will bring together biotechnology and commercial resources to reinforce existing strengths in agricultural crops such as sugarbeet, maize, oilseeds, grasses, cereals, and vegetables. Zeneca

Seeds now has annual worldwide sales of £150 million. It hopes to break even this year.

A spokesman for Zeneca said that the merged entity would have improved scope for profitability and strengthening its research and development base, marketing coverage, product span, and geographic spread.

My Kinda Town plans expansion

MY KINDA TOWN, the restaurants group that owns the Chicago Pizza Pie Factory, Chicago Meatpackers and Henry J Bean's Bar and Grill, is looking to expand further in spite of a 23 per cent drop in first-half profits. Tough trading conditions in France, exacerbated by strikes and terrorist incidents in Paris, are blamed for a fall in group pre-tax profits to £1.02 million (£1.33 million) in the six months to December 31. Turnover, boosted by six new openings, grew 19 per cent to £15.2 million. There was an exceptional charge of £121,000, relating to French closure provisions.

The company, which operates a total of 44 outlets in 14 countries, said it is on target for at least 12 openings in this financial year. It recently emerged that My Kinda Town will manage Capital Radio's new 300-seat themed radio restaurant, which is due to open in London's Leicester Square by the end of the summer. The interim dividend is maintained at 1p and is payable on April 26, from earnings of 3.3p (4p) a share.

Tempus, page 26

Wagon warning

SHARES in Wagon, the engineering company, dropped 32p to 389p yesterday after it delivered a warning that full-year profits would fall below expectations. The company, which specialises in precision springs for the automotive industry, blamed a fall in demand and difficulties in integrating recent acquisitions. However, John Hudson, the chief executive of Wagon, said that underlying demand levels were expected to improve. He added: "It is still expected that reasonable progress will be made and the group approaches the new financial year with confidence."

German firms gloomy

GERMAN industry yesterday gave its gloomiest forecast on the economy for years, saying that it expects almost no growth and a jump in unemployment this year. Presenting its spring survey of German industry, the Federation of Chambers of Commerce (DIHT) under the growth forecasts of the Bonn Government by predicting stagnation, Franz Schoser, DIHT managing director, said: "The economy has cooled off again. We see very slight growth this year at best. The economy will have great difficulty regaining momentum... the mood among firms has hit a low point." The government is predicting 1.5 per cent growth in gross domestic product.

TBI's £17m in sales

TBI, the London and Cardiff-based property investment and development company, has disposed of a further £17.4 million of property investments. The investments sold include the first disposal from the 'Molynex' portfolio, which was acquired at the end of December. The Molynex property is the long leasehold interest in a Cheshire shopping centre, which has been sold to Asda, the Leeds-based supermarket group, and brings the total from disposals since the beginning of TBI's financial year last April to nearly £25 million.

Reuters wins award

REUTERS has won this year's award for the best annual report and accounts. Triplex-Lloyd, the West Midlands engineering company, won the award for smaller companies. Richard Sykes, QC, chairman of the judges of the awards, which are sponsored by the Stock Exchange and the three chartered accountancy institutes, described the Reuters' accounts as "full of action and excitement" and praised the mass of material in the report's financial review. Although he thought the overall standard of reporting was "edging up", he said that many reports from smaller companies were "inept".

Who will audit the auditors?

John Roques considers the needs of a body to oversee standards in the profession

Much time has been taken over the past few years over the arrangements for regulating and disciplining auditors. Several working parties have been set up and the most recent of these, chaired by Chris Swinson, is soon to issue its final report.

Some believe that this report will recommend that the disciplinary and regulatory activities of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales should be grouped under an office for professional standards and that a new body should consider the extent to which the public interest is served.

It is also expected to recommend that the position of the Auditing Practices Board should be considered by a working party. If true, these proposals are largely a continuation of the past and are just bureaucratic — not a sound future for the profession.

There are three principles that must underlie any new system. First, it must be seen to provide the level of independence that the public has a right to expect. Second, it must eliminate the duplication of disciplinary effort by the Department of Trade and Industry and the Institute. Third, it must be free of unnecessary

levels of red tape for smaller audit firms. Most commentators also agree that practitioner-led regulation is more efficient so long as the public interest needs are met.

What solution would achieve these aims? Deloitte & Touche recommends that the whole organisation for regulating and disciplining "public interest" auditors should be supervised by the Financial Reporting Council, thus bringing the responsibility for controlling the development and enforcement of both accounting and auditing standards under one body.

The Auditing Practices Board would have an equivalent role to that of the Accounting Standards Board. A new disciplinary body, with powers not unlike those of the Review Panel, should take over the roles of both the Joint Disciplinary Scheme and inquiries made of professional firms by inspectors appointed by the DTI. This would meet the public expectation that all standard-setting, regulation and disciplinary activities should be dealt with under one umbrella independent of the institutes. The structure would be credible and have longevity as it builds on the considerable respect and stature which the Financial Reporting Council



John Roques lists three principles for any new system

has already established. Only by separating the public interest cases and applying the requisite level of investigation and action to such cases, will it be possible to avoid the non-public interest cases and small audit firms being weighed down with unnecessary red tape. The difficulties of defining public interest should not be used as an excuse for

the shelter of the institutes, the DTI should change the law to provide for limited liability partnerships in the UK and follow the lead of the US Congress by substituting a system of proportional liability for joint and several liability for auditors.

Will these proposals be adequate for those who wish to establish an SEC in the UK? The SEC is expensive regulation and dominated by lawyers rather than those involved in the practices of financial reporting and auditing. There is no evidence that 50 years of regulation by the SEC has solved the problem of audit standards in the United States. If a government determines to establish a companies commission, this would not be a disaster by itself, so long as it restricted its activity in the regulation of the accounting profession to oversight of the Financial Reporting Council.

Some are concerned that our views diminish the standing of the Institute. I disagree. I think this gives them the opportunity to develop further the facilities that should be seen as world-class centres of excellence.

If the audit faculty took on leadership in a coherent strategy to prevent and detect corporate fraud, then we would really be back on the road to eliminating the expectation gap and re-establishing the standing of the profession.

The author is Senior Partner, Deloitte & Touche

The issues are now out in the open

THERE were times during last week's mournful press briefing to announce the failure of the attempt to merge the English ICA and CIMA, the management accounting body, when you would have not been at all surprised to find both presidents breaking into the mode of the popular financial services advertisement and singing, "Let's face the music, and dance".

But, as events this week show, the real action, the positive work of the profession, continues unabated elsewhere. We have had a robust set of proposals from the Auditing Practices Board (APB), which redefine and clarify the strength of independent auditors, the opening of a tumultuous battle over the principles of financial reporting, and see the Accounting Standards Board (ASB) under serious and sustained attack for the first time.

These are issues which are at the heart of what accountants are about, yet none of the debate or argument emanated from the English ICA. It might argue that this is not entirely truthful. The APB is an offshoot of the accountancy bodies, it could say. This is true. But the APB is striving desperately for freedom from the clammy and restrictive hand of its parent. The APB president, Ian Paistowe, of Arthur Andersen, made no secret of this earlier in the week. "We have told the accountancy bodies that we don't believe we belong with you," he said. Rumours are rife of shouting matches between Paistowe and the institute leadership. This cannot be pleasant. Paistowe is more of a rapier than a bludgeon man. These are painful times for Moorgate Place. But the leadership in the audit world is coming from the APB. Ian Percy, its vice-chairman, said this week that "auditing is about governance. It is critical for the confidence in business operations, our capital markets and the public sector". That sounds like someone who has got his priorities right. Equally, the extraordinary attack on the ASB by Ernst & Young takes the debate over the future of financial reporting out into the open. But it is open ground, far from the English Institute.

The debate is one which was dealt with in these pages when the ASB first published its Statement of Principles. Now Ernst & Young is having one final push. The press release dramatised the issue. "The future of UK financial reporting — one month to decide", it

was headed. This is not entirely true. Responses to the ASB's statement are indeed due in at the end of March. But that is not the end of the matter.

The argument has escalated. Nick Land, Ernst & Young's senior partner, has entered the fray. In the foreword to the firm's booklet, *Time to Decide*, he says that the ASB "seems to be pursuing a rather academic agenda of its own, unprompted by user demand, that envisages the abandonment of historical cost accounting in favour of a system based on current values".

Any readers who recall the interminable debates over accounting for inflation, as the debate over historical versus current values was once termed, will groan inwardly at this point. It is an endless and fruitless debate. Ian Davidson, of Storehouse, who is no spring chicken himself, will tell you that his father was on one of the original working parties to debate the issue around the time that Everest was being conquered and Queen Elizabeth

came to the throne. But the debate over current values will never be conquered. Sir David Tweedie, chairman of the ASB, will argue that theory no longer matters on that one. It is simply the logic of substance over form which dictates a change.

"Items in the balance sheet should be genuine assets and genuine liabilities," he will say. Ron Paterson, Ernst & Young's technical partner, who wrote the booklet, argues that Tweedie is academic to an extreme. "We are driven," says Paterson, "to the Luddite end of the spectrum to counter Tweedie's radical extremes." Maybe the heart of the matter can be seen in Nick

Land's foreword. Referring to the ASB's principles he said: "Some of its proposals are theoretical to the point that they are scarcely comprehensible by most accountants and other businessmen. Accounting traditionally the language of business, is at risk of being taken over by the rhetoric of theorists."

It is possible, perhaps, to read between the lines here. Company directors are conservative and dislike new rules. Finance directors find it painful to confront them with Tweedie's new realities. There is commercial advantage in being an accounting firm that seems to support the harassed company director against the bogy of radical accounting theorists. Whatever the reasons, it is good to be back on serious ground again.



ROBERT BRUCE

TEN out of ten for sheer timing

SOMETIMES sheer accidents of timing do work out. Take the case of TEN, the television company that produces the monthly video-training package, *The Accountants' Channel*. Today sees publication of a polemic from Ernst & Young by its technical partner, Ron Paterson, seeking to rubbish the recent statement of principles issued by the Accounting

Standards Board, chaired by Sir David Tweedie. And what should be on TEN's latest video — a furious debate on the subject between Tweedie and Paterson.

Prickly dispute

Scottish accountants who know Paterson and Tweedie well will be relieved that they

are arguing over accounting matters. Normally it is the relative footballing merits, if any, of Patrick Thistle and Falkirk.

DTI in retreat

The Department of Trade and Industry was savaged by just about everybody in the accountancy profession last week after the publication of

the "Feasibility Investigation of Joint and Several Liability", particularly its negative approach to the possibility of allowing proportional liability. No surprise therefore to find the press office distancing itself. "It doesn't reflect our views. It's only a consultative document," seemed to be the line. Beleaguered accountants can probably breathe again.

Reed rescue

Sir George Vallings was chief executive of CIMA until last June. Then he devoted his efforts to proposals to merge CIMA with the English ICA, which were abandoned last week. So it was good news for him the day the merger was pulled that he was appointed non-executive chairman of Reed Accountancy, the recruitment agency.

ROBERT BRUCE



THEATRE

Whatever kind of show it may be, the new *Gulp Fiction* is undeniably good fun for the audience



OPERA

English Touring Opera's latest annual tour gets off to a shaky start with a routine version of *Rigoletto*

THE TIMES ARTS



MUSIC

Lorin Maazel enjoys himself as the Pittsburgh Symphony brings its 100th birthday tour to London



TOMORROW

Now that she's selling more records, everyone wants to work with — and talk to — Celine Dion

THEATRE: Benedict Nightingale on a plotless, pointless, joyously goofy spoof

Reservoir cats are just a hoot

This cheerful, burning, uncategorisable show begins with two men with convict arrows on their white tunics emerging from what we are told is Pentonville prison. They are twins; one is called Reggie and one Ronnie; they have been serving a longish stretch for bank robbery. But there the resemblances to the East End's most celebrated twosome end. For no evident reason, these brothers' surname is Diss. They are also black and as droll as you might have predicted, given that both are veterans of that excellent revue troupe, the Fosse.

Gulp Fiction
Theatre Royal,
Stratford East

say, really riles them. That is frustration in romance. Only one thing could divide them. That is if one were to steal the other's woman.

This duly occurs, giving the evening such vestigial shape and plot as it possesses. At any rate, Ron is asked for a date by Reg's seductive girlfriend. But this leads to nothing worse than transitory ructions in the last reel. The main object is to allow Gee to dress up first in a black mini-skirt, then in a wiggling, mincing impersonation of a huffy broad. Indeed, you might say that the real object of the evening is to allow both men to launch into as many good-humoured spoofs as time for quick changes of costume permits.

Though Irish Cooke, the author and director, has called her two-hander *Gulp Fiction*, the connection with Quentin Tarantino is even more precarious. It consists of nothing more than giving Robbie Gee's Reggie and Eddie Nestor's Ronnie the rather sinister dark suits that the hoods wear in *Reservoir Dogs*. No ears are cut off, no abdomens shot to smithereens. These villains' idea of violence is mainly to take the pins out of rude jokes and lob them at each other with great chorales of pleasure.

"Your face has so rosy bumps, a blind man could read it." "You're so stupid, you think black consciousness is a group that stays awake all night." "You're so ugly that if I took you to a pet shop, they'd put you in the window." The standard of humour is not too high, nor meant to be, for the Diss twins are a goofy, inimitable duo. Only one thing, they

Nestor gives us the Diss mother, a comely soul whose living room is as pink and garish as the dress she wears when she goes out on the razze. Gee ripostes with her over-age lover, an army chef who clanks around in medals looking like a Jamaican Monty. When the action switches from a grotty housing estate to a mock-Tudor pub called the Duck and Dive, both performers reappear in gold lamé, purple lapels and silver-tinger toupes, playing a couple of inept



Gags and dolls: Robbie Gee and Eddie Nestor play the gangsters armed with gags

singers called Stratford and Avon.

With Felix Cross banging away on the synthesizers and plenty of ebullient give-and-take with the audience, this is undeniably good fun. There may be no logical reason for Gee and Nestor to do anything they do, but that does not seem

to matter at the time. Both are gifted comedians who could simply stand on their heads and pull funny faces for half an hour, and the laughter would probably keep coming. Is it grudging to wish that: a) their material was bolder and more inventive, and b) that it was less dependent on

Afro-Caribbean references? Probably. The show is aimed not at white critics driving in from west London, but at people who really know their Jamaica from their Trinidad. The reaction on the first night made it clear that the cast's rapport with its target audience is spot-on.

Set on the wrong course from the start

OPERA
Rigoletto/
Werther
Sadler's Wells

ENGLISH Touring Opera's seventeenth annual tour got off to a shaky start on Tuesday at Sadler's Wells. *Rigoletto* may be one of the most familiar and popular works in the repertoire, but in a good performance its bleakness should still shock, the boldness of Verdi's assault on convention still thrill. ETO's new version rarely rises above the routine.

Stephen Medcalf, the company's director of productions, can usually be relied on to make efficient, unfussy use of whatever resources are to hand. Here, however, his efforts are hampered by Charles Edwards's ugly, inflexible set, a clutter of crumbling masonry and peeling walls, in the midst of which perches that dreariest of pseudo-Expressionist clichés: a windowless, wonky boxroom. It looks as though a furniture van has crashed backwards onto the stage and lost a wheel; and it cramps and constrains the singers.

In the circumstances, it was hardly surprising if the cast did less than justice to some of opera's most complex, ambivalent characters. Glenville Hargreaves's intense Rigoletto was unfocused in his anguish, while Jeffrey Stewart was a virile but undisciplined Duke. Only Gail Pearson's radiant, clear-toned Gilda quickened the pulse.

Martin André in the pit struggled to supply the dramatic shape that the staging lacked. Reduced orchestral forces (26 players in all) meant that tragic grandeur was never an option; but compensating gains in clarity and intimacy seemed few and far between.

On Wednesday, before a smaller audience, Massenet's *Werther* fared better. Andrew Greenwood's reading of the (reorchestrated) score was clearly defined and nicely paced, the ebb and flow of passion and remorse well caught.

Robert Chevara's stark production, first seen last October, could do more to characterise the ordered social background to the protagonists' emotional turmoil — and Lucy Hall's rather spartan designs do little to help. But the sense of dramatic purpose is always strong, the English translation (by Aman-

da Holden, who also translated *Rigoletto*) is heard to good effect, and at least the singers have room to move.

Geraint Dodd and Christine Botes were a vivid pair of guilty lovers: she a darkly passionate, earthy Charlotte; he combining ardour with grace in the daunting, high-flying title role. Roderick Williams's Albert was finely nuanced and firmly sung. Matthew Hargreaves (a dignified Magistrate) and Maureen Braithwaite (a bright, appealing Sophie) stood out in an impressively solid supporting cast.

IAN BRUNSKILL
DONALD COOPER



Complex characters: Gail Pearson as Gilda, Glenville Hargreaves as Rigoletto, in Stephen Medcalf's staging

Royal National Theatre

The Ends of the Earth

a new play by David Lan



Presented in association with AT&T: OnStage

In a country in crisis it is inadvisable to have one of your own...

Samuel Bond and Michael Sheen lead the cast of David Lan's new play, directed by Andrei Serban.

NT Box Office 0171-928 2252
Curtains: Previews Tonight, Tomorrow, 26, 27, 28 Feb at 7.30pm. Opening 29 Feb at 7.00pm, then 1 Mar at 7.30pm, 2 Mar at 2.30pm & 7.30pm & continuing.

Over-familiarity breeds confusion

ORCHESTRAL tours can be a mixed blessing. On the one hand, the players have the opportunity to familiarise themselves intimately with the selected works and give confident, well-rehearsed performances. On the other hand, by the far-end of the tour, the pieces are never as fresh as they once were, for either players or conductor.

The Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra's centennial European tour reached its climax at the Festival Hall on Wednesday night, with its outgoing music director Lorin Maazel putting the ensemble once again through its paces in Bartók's *Concerto for Orchestra* and accompanying the young Lithuanian-born player, Julian Rachlin, in Sibelius's Violin Concerto in D minor.

Repeated performances seem to have taken their toll on Rachlin. He plays with as much technical assurance as ever, and his account is by no means lacking in character or motivation. But his attempts to inject spontaneity now lead him to pull about the rhythms of his unaccompanied solos in the most un-Sibelian way. He is undoubtedly a highly talented player — he brings a wide variety of tonal expression to the central Adagio and effortless virtuosity to the finale — but now the tour is over, he would do well to overhaul his reading of the concerto with a view to separating introspection from affectation.

The Festival Hall is no Heinz Hall — the luxuriously refurbished auditorium the Pittsburghers have at home — and it may have been that they were still getting their bearings in Sibelius's *Finlandia*. At any rate it sounded convincingly crude and banal.

By the end of the concert, however, they were fully in their stride and gave a virtuoso performance of Bartók's orchestral showpiece. If once in a while there was a feeling of an interpretation going through the motions, things looked up dramatically in the "Intermezzo Interrotto", where the cantabile melody introduced by the violas had an ideally intuitive feel. The Presto finale was touched in style and the concerto brought to a rousing conclusion.

CONCERT

Pittsburgh
SO/Maazel
Festival Hall

Rather surprisingly, for such a cerebral musician, Maazel seemed to enjoy himself most in the three encores. The first two, a pair of Brahms Hungarian Dances, were initiated with great showmanship, and all were delivered with unflagging energy.

BARRY MILLINGTON

"...visually dazzling epic...
...the outstanding performance is by Sharon Stone"

"...De Niro's finest hour..."

"...compulsive viewing,
with Stone matching De Niro stride for stride."

Robert DE NIRO Sharon STONE Joe PESCI

ACADEMY AWARD NOMINATION
SHARON STONE
WINNER GOLDEN GLOBE
SHARON STONE

CASINO

STARTS TODAY

AND AT CINEMAS ACROSS THE COUNTRY

LOU REED

SET THE TWILIGHT REELING
IF YOU LIKED NEW YORK,
YOU'LL LOVE THIS NEW ALBUM.
LIVE!

NEW YORK, NEW YORK, NEW YORK

LOU REED



CHOICE 1
Samantha Bond
stars in the new
play *The Ends of the Earth*
VENUE: Tonight at the
National Theatre



CHOICE 2
Tori Amos, with
two big albums
under her belt,
launches her tour
VENUE: Tonight at the
Regent, Ipswich

THE TIMES POP ARTS



POP 1
What you didn't see
on TV: Caitlin
Moran goes behind
the scenes at
this week's
Brit Awards



POP 2
Exploring the
links between
literature and
music in the
unlikely setting
of a London pub

In with the old, out with the true. How the Brit Awards were turned into a TV farce

A word from our censor

Clean, lucid and friendly at all times. This seems to be the effect under which pop stars' behaviour is allowed. Having opinions, starting fights, protesting against social injustice and the selective rewriting of history are all quickly edited out, in favour of Alan Morrissey acting out 'Janis Joplin's Nursery Years' and David Bowie reminding us just how long it's been since we wanted to do anything other than drown him.

To recap what really went on at the Brits this year: Oasis are snide and cruel to Blur, Liam Gallagher rolls around on the floor like the larrupped gibbon that he is, attempts to shove his award up his behind and starts a play-fight with Michael Hutchence by calling him a 'has-been'.

Massive Attack comment on the building of Bristol's wealth on the slave trade, Jarvis Cocker attempts to moon what there is of his skinny arse at the 'King of Pop' Michael Jackson, and every second is edited out in favour of dull live clips and fascinating crowd shots of red-faced men in suits heehawing at Lenny Kravitz's moans.

It is bizarre, Millions of pounds were thrown at *The Word* in an effort to have something, anything spontaneously exciting happen yet, when things do kick off on television, every last morsel is edited out.

There seems to be an air of bemusement as to why *The Brits* were neutered. Even Richard and Judy on *This Morning* expressed puzzlement at the censoring on television of events which were recounted at length in the next morning's newspapers, complete with pictures. And when daytime TV's fluffy couple are dismayed at not seeing the full events, surely all of Middle England follows suit.

The measure of health in a democracy can be calculated by the freedom it gives its artists — and when it gets to the point where their sarcasm is edited, there is great cause for concern. Of course, the bigwigs gave free rein to those pop stars spouting the really offensive stuff. Michael Jackson's seven minutes of prime-time advertising, for example, with its utterly distasteful wheedling on of small drama-school children muddled up to look



Sickening: the "king of pop" made the bile rise in our throats with his unspeakable suffer-little-children act

like bombed Bosnian orphans, among whom he struck a Jesus pose and stimped as they clutched his toast-rack chest. Overblown whoring such as this needs brutal editing — a simple cut to black.

Since all the stuff that made headlines the next day was edited from the TV show, it raises the question of why the Brits were televised in the first

place. It is like showing edited highlights of Saturday's football without the goals.

There can be only two reasons for this: stupidity or censorship. And as the executive producer of *The Brits* is Malcolm Gerrie, former producer of scandal-ridden *The Tube* and one of the brightest figures in music television, we can only conclude that pointless censorship is at work — the same kind of ineffective, random censorship that led to Radio 1 banning The Bangles' *Walk Like an Egyptian* and The Boomtown Rats' *I Don't Like Mondays* during the

criterion for the edits made. This is frankly laughable — there was time enough for lingering shots of Paul Young smoking a cigarette, plus numerous dull live clips of Oasis — and when this was pointed out to him, he went on to mention 'taste'. Well, a possible explanation for editing out Liam's bleary triumphalism, but surely no excuse for removing Massive Attack's statements on slavery.

Next up is Initial Television, the production company, where things move into focus. Their press officer is keen to talk but, apparently, has been ordered not to. She conveys the impression that she also thought the cuts were unnecessary and points the finger at sponsors the BFI, who remain resolutely unavailable for comment.

So it is the industry censoring its own that seems to be the problem — something far more outrageous than a lanky pop star from Sheffield trying to expose the idiocy of the whole affair.

CAITLIN MORAN

Who wants some Pulp with their fiction?

Ann Scanlon on the London pub offering a marriage between book readings and *Desert Island Discs*

On Sunday, Patrick McCabe, author of the Booker-nominated black comedy *The Butcher Boy*, will get up in a north London pub and start to read out loud. Every now and then he will stop, and one of his favourite songs will be played.

And thus will *Vox'n'Roll* be born. It was devised by Gerry O'Boyle, owner of Filthy MacNasty's Whiskey Café, and the rock promoter Cath and Thomas. The idea is to bring literature back to the bar room. "Throughout history literature has come from the bar, and

many great writers have spent a lot of their time in bars."

McCabe says that he finds inspiration in the 'ambience of pubs — not necessarily in beer-sodden drink culture itself, but in the company of people in an unrefined atmosphere.'

James Hawes, who will be Filthy's guest on the second Sunday, is such a fan of the place that he used it as a setting for a couple of the central scenes in *A White Merc with Fins*, which recent-

ly earned him the biggest-ever advance for a first-time novelist. "Some people have said that my book really felt like it had the smell of the pub about it, which is exactly what I wanted," he says. "I think it's really important that there shouldn't be any divide between what people see as literature, in inverted commas, and what people see as entertainment."

Filthy's already has a resident rock'n'roll bard — Shane MacGowan, 'lonce of the Pogues, now the Pogues', who has been using it as his own personal living room since it first opened three years ago and *Vox'n'Roll's* line-up of readers is similarly renegade. After McCabe and Hawes, Iain Sinclair and James Kelman will appear, as will cannabis smuggler Howard Marks and Edward Bunker, a crime writer who achieved wider fame as Mr Blue in *Reservoir Dogs*.

Irvine Welsh, author of *Trainspotting*, the book that spawned what must be the rock'n'roll film of the year, has repeatedly said that he came to literature through music. He is interested in 'Lou Reed or Iggy Pop, Shane MacGowan or Nick Cave, people who can actually do something that is relevant to the culture they're writing about'.

Following football and comedy, could literature become the rock'n'roll of the next millennium?

Patrick McCabe at Filthy MacNasty's Whiskey Café, 60 Amwell Street, London EC1 (0171-637 6067), 9pm on Sunday.

LONDON

TOSCA Patti Walker's beautiful production returns to English National Opera tonight, with Joyce Kilmer taking the role of Puccini's lover. Last night, the soprano sang 'Cavatina' (Philips). Tickets: 10-30. Tel: 0171-432 3300. Tonight: 7.30pm.

THE ENDS OF THE EARTH First night of the new play by David Lauder, set in the Balkans at the end of the 19th century. Tickets: 10-30. Tel: 0171-236 2352. Tonight: 8pm. Tomorrow: 7.30pm. Opens Feb 23: 7pm. In: 10.

GYORGY KURTAS AT 70 The London Sinfonietta celebrates the 70th birthday of the composer and pianist in a concert of his music. Tickets: 10-30. Tel: 0171-236 2352. Tonight: 8pm. Tomorrow: 7.30pm. Opens Feb 23: 7pm. In: 10.

EMMA FIELDING Jason Isaacs and Adam Scott play the last roles in Craig Raine's version of *Emma*. Tickets: 10-30. Tel: 0171-339 4404. Mon-Sat, 8pm; Sun, 3pm.

CHAPTER TWO Tom Cawston and Sharon Gless play unattached New Yorkers whirling towards each other in Neil Simon's still entertaining, touching comedy. Tickets: 10-30. Tel: 0171-416 6082. Mon-Sat, 8pm; Sun, 3pm. Opens Feb 23: 7pm.

THE GLASS MENAGERIE Sam Mendes's latest production. Tickets: 10-30. Tel: 0171-432 3300. Mon-Sat, 8pm; Sun, 3pm. Opens Feb 23: 7pm.

AN INSPECTOR CALLS Stephen Dillane's powerful production, with Nicholas Woodeson as the all-knowing Inspector, and Edward Peel and Susan Engel as the pillars of the establishment. Tickets: 10-30. Tel: 0171-432 3300. Mon-Sat, 8pm; Sun, 3pm. Opens Feb 23: 7pm.

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WEEKEND CHOICE

A daily guide to arts and entertainment compiled by Kris Anderson

ELSEWHERE

DERBY Opening night for a new production of *Test of the D'Urbervilles* by C. S. Lewis. Tickets: 10-30. Tel: 0171-432 3300. Mon-Sat, 8pm; Sun, 3pm. Opens Feb 23: 7pm.

EDINBURGH Seven galleries play host to British Art Show 4, a once every five-year salute to contemporary British artists from the South Bank National Gallery. Tickets: 10-30. Tel: 0171-432 3300. Mon-Sat, 8pm; Sun, 3pm. Opens Feb 23: 7pm.

GLASGOW Opening night for a new production of *Test of the D'Urbervilles* by C. S. Lewis. Tickets: 10-30. Tel: 0171-432 3300. Mon-Sat, 8pm; Sun, 3pm. Opens Feb 23: 7pm.

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A daily guide to arts and entertainment compiled by Kris Anderson

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POP 3

Alanis Morissette doesn't need dancing girls or supplicant children. She has plenty of talent to rely on



POP 4

An embarrassment of riches on a terrific new album by Joan Osborne, the woman who's got it all

THE ARTS



POP 5

A valiant effort from Iggy Pop on his latest, *Naughty Little Doggie*, but it's strictly one for the diehards



POP 6

Marc Almond makes his comeback with *Fantastic Star*, an album of grandeur and scope

Flashing the peace-sign

David Sinclair is pleased to report that Alanis Morissette is no jagged little pill

Amid all the rumpus of the Brit Awards last Monday, one performance stood out for its simple, heartfelt conviction. Alanis Morissette, the winner of the trophy for Best International Newcomer, sang *Hand in my Pocket* without the aid of dancing girls, supplicant children or aerial hoists. Her energetic performance was all the more impressive for that lack of pretension and, while Morissette says she harbours "mixed emotions" about receiving awards, she nevertheless relished the opportunity to play in front of the powerbrokers of the British music business.

"I love playing for audiences that have never heard of me. There's a certain satisfaction that I get from communicating with people for the first time," she says. On the face of it, this might seem a little ingenuous. Eight months after its release, her album, *Jagged Little Pill*, remains in the Top Five. In America, where she has been nominated for six Grammys, the album has sold five million copies and this week went back to No 1. Few people who take even a passing interest in this kind of thing can be unaware of who she is.

Still, the 21-year-old Canadian singer-songwriter is one of the freshest faces to join the top table of pop. Predictably, she has been allocated a niche alongside various other feisty, female performers, a link, perhaps, between the sometimes abusive assertiveness of Liz Phair and the soft-rock narrative style of Sheryl Crow.

One song in particular has led to a rash of "angry young woman" headlines. *You Oughta Know* is an elegantly turned essay in uncontained rage — "Every time I scratch my nails down someone else's back/I hope you feel it... can you feel it?" — and initially had the music press referring to her "barbed and spiteful brand of pop".

The reality is not so clear cut. For a start, there are just as many gentle and philosophical songs on *Jagged Little Pill*, such as the current single,



Alanis Morissette is the international newcomer of the year, and she has the Brit to prove it

You Learn, and the wildly optimistic *Head Over Feet*. And, in person, she is the voice of sweet reason itself.

As with all her songs, *You Oughta Know* stems from personal experience. It was addressed to a real person. "One day I got off the phone from talking to him and just wrote down exactly what I felt," she says. "But I wrote it for the sake of my own release, not as a way of getting revenge on him. Actually, he's a sweetheart. And secretly, now, I thank him for ending the

relationship because it forced me to grow up, to take responsibility for myself and not put my self-esteem in other people's hands any more. You can't win that way."

Growing up is a process Morissette has accomplished quicker than most. Born in Ottawa, she went into show-business at the age of ten, landing a part in a children's series on cable TV. The money she made financed her first single, and at 14 she signed a publishing contract which, after a self-financed debut

album, led to the release in Canada on the major-league label MCA of *Alanis* (1991) and *Now is the Time* (1992).

The daughter of two teachers, Morissette describes herself as "always an over-achiever". Even while she was undertaking all this acting, writing and recording, she still managed to get A grades at school. At the age of 17 she left home and moved to Toronto. Then, at 19, she took herself off to Los Angeles, where she hooked up with Glen Ballard, who co-wrote *Man in the*

Mirror with Michael Jackson. He and Morissette wrote and recorded virtually the whole of *Jagged Little Pill* on a shoestring budget — a creative process which she describes as "very pure, very fast, an almost mystical experience" — before securing a contract with Maverick, the label owned by Madonna.

"She's offered to give me advice, but I haven't taken her up on it," Morissette says. "I want to make my own mistakes and enjoy my own triumphs." She professes to be unaware that *Jagged Little Pill* has outsold Madonna's current album, *Something to Remember*, five to one.

Like Madonna, Morissette

"I was always an over-achiever"

was brought up in the Catholic faith, which she has since renounced. She sings of the experience with typical candour in *Forgiven*: "We all had delusions in our head/We all had our minds made up for us/We had to believe in something/So we did."

She has no time for drugs — "for a control freak, the idea of being so out of control is too frightening" — but has instead become very tuned in to the Californian culture of self-examination. "My religion for a long time became psychological awareness. My Bible was a book on psychology. I used to do a lot of therapy. It became like a drug to me, but the benefits have been invaluable, both to my state of mind and to my ability to write songs that are a genuine expression of my emotions."

And, like any reasonably rounded individual, those emotions comprise more than just anger. But there is still a lot of it about. "My parents were offered five jobs right out of university," she says. "Now you can have several degrees and not get any job."

"And there's a reason why there's a lot of anger in music made by people my age. There's a whole movement towards the truth and, of course, there's going to be anger and frustration and feeling compelled to lash out. Obviously, you have to take responsibility for certain mistakes that you make, but we're only human."

NEW RELEASES: Joan Osborne scores on British debut

JOAN OSBORNE

Relish (Blue Gorilla/Mercury 526 699)
WITH a voice like honey and lemon, and songs that mix modern rock with elements of blues, soul and hillbilly gospel, Joan Osborne has got it all. The success of her debut British single, *One of Us*, has paved the way for an album that is astonishingly rich in musical detail, spiritual imagery and raw feel.

Naturally, the 33-year-old singer from Kentucky has honed her music over many years, since starting in the blues bars of New York. And much credit is also due to a supporting cast of seasoned songwriting collaborators, including guitarist Eric Bazilian and keyboard player Rob Hyman of the Hooters, plus her producer Rick Chertoff.

But the key to Osborne's appeal lies in her instinctive ability to impose a strong sense of tradition on words and music that have an instant popular appeal. Her unusual, yodelling-like intonation at the beginning of *Pensacola* is descended from the Appalachian style of country-gospel singing. And, at her bluest, as on the slow, dirty chug of *Dracula Moon* or her lightly sketched version of the Sonny Boy Williamson standard *Help Me*, she sounds like Janis Joplin without the whisky bottle.

Two songs in particular stand out from an embarrassment of riches. *Spider Web* tells of a dream in which Ray

A Pelé of the blues

Charles regains his sight, only to find that his wonderful singing voice has deserted him: "No Georgia on my mind no more/I stay in bed with MTV". Constructed from an astonishing lattice-work of percussion and funk guitar rhythms, it is a song that interweaves complex layers of music and meaning, yet produces an immediate effect. In a very different vein, the next single, *Right Hand Man*, is a glorious, skipped-beat stomp pushed along by shimmering guitar chords, a howling sax solo and the swaggering pay-off line: "Use me up if you think you can."

IGGY POP

Naughty Little Doggie (Virgin Records America CDVUS 102)
ONE of rock's last great characters, Iggy Pop is always fun to have around, but offers uncertain value as a record purchase. Writing, as ever, from an unrepentantly personal perspective, the 48-year-old Pop has two main, possibly interlinked, themes. One is the effect of his advancing years — "I see my future shuffling/A shaky step

at a time" — the other his increasingly indiscriminate lust for practically anything in a skirt.

Not the world's most convincing singer, he tends to sketch in the melodies on generic garageband rockers such as *Innocent World* and *Heart is Saved*, as if joining up the dots with a rather uncertain hand. A valiant effort, no doubt, but this is not an album whose appeal is likely to stretch much beyond Pop's diehard fans.

MARC ALMOND

Fantastic Star (Some Bizarre/Mercury 528 659)
EMERGING from a period of personal upheaval, Marc Almond opens his account with his new record company with an album of impressive grandeur and epic scope.

He describes the collection as "a search for glamour and love through obsession, addiction, betrayal and stardom", and these elements are much in evidence on tracks such as *Caged*, *We Need Jealousy* and *Brilliant Creatures*, which marry his fey synth-pop roots with grutty touches of rock'n'roll sleaze. At the core of the album is a spellbinding song called *The Idol* (Parts 1 & 2). Written in a pastiche of the style of Gary Glitter, it is a long and thoughtful dissertation on the strange role that tragedy plays in contributing to the romantic lure of pop icons.

DAVID SINCLAIR

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TOP TEN ALBUMS

- 1 (What's the Story) Morning Glory? Oasis (Creation)
- 2 Expecting to Fly Bluetones (Superior Quality)
- 3 Bizarre Fruit I & II M People (Deconstruction)
- 4 Jagged Little Pill Alanis Morissette (Maverick)
- 5 Don't Stop Status Quo (Polygram TV)
- 6 The Bends Radiohead (Parlophone)
- 7 Different Class Pulp (Island)
- 8 Stanley Road Paul Weller (Go! Discs)
- 9 Definitely Maybe Oasis (Creation)
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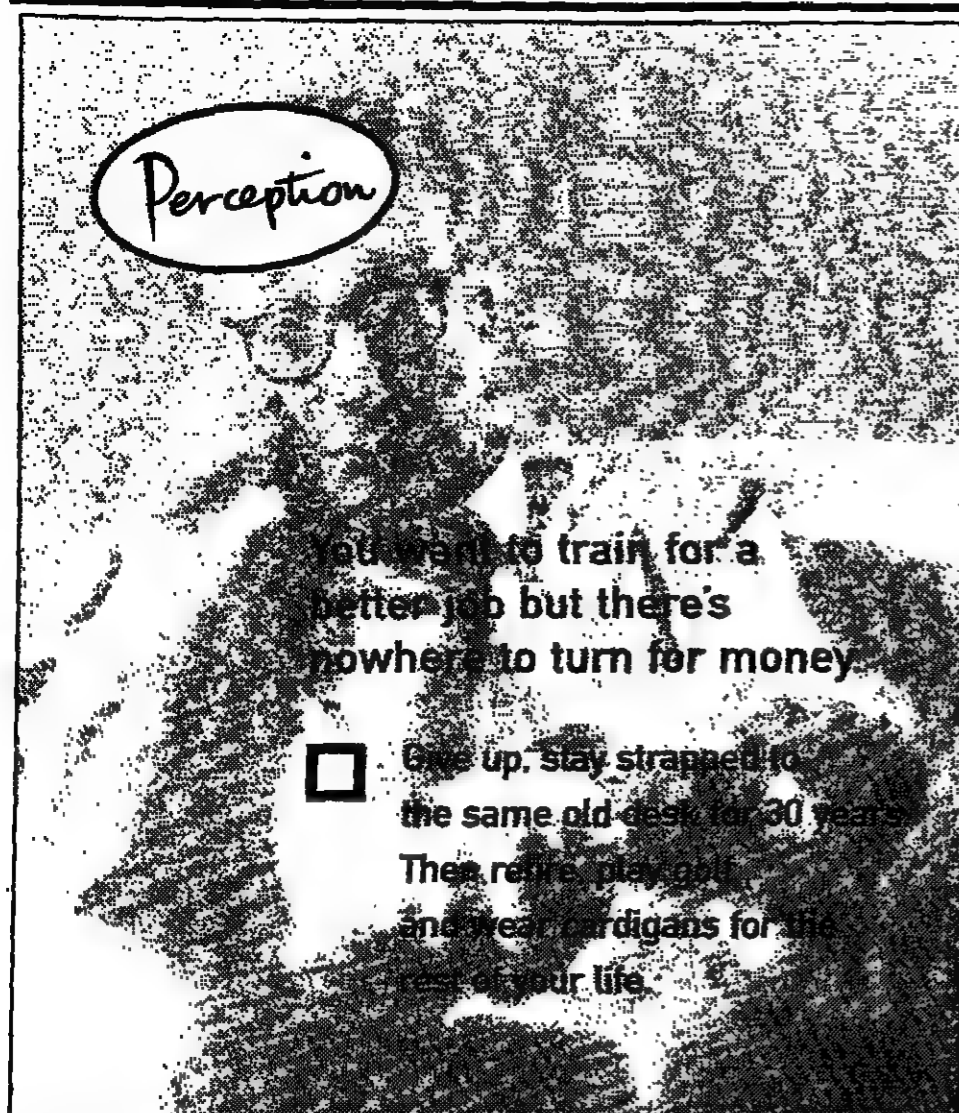
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The essay can be written in English, French, German, Italian or Spanish. It must be 2,000-3,000 words together with a brief summary of the contents, not more than one page in length and should be typewritten on A4 size paper. Participants must be nationals of the European Union aged between 18 and 23 on April 1st, 1996. Essays will be accepted between March 1st and March 31st 1996.

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DESIGN

The memory of architect James Stirling is honoured in a new £20,000 prize for the profession



MUSIC 1

In this month of quartets, the Takács take the crown of glory with their Schubert cycle at the Wigmore Hall

THE TIMES ARTS



MUSIC 2

An enjoyable mix of Ravel, Berlioz and Sibelius from Sir Simon Rattle and the CBSO



RADIO

Astronomers on the air waves? It's the type of programme Radio 4 does particularly well these days

Architecture has a new award, but will it stir up as much interest as the Turner or Booker? Marcus Binney reports

And may the best building win...

Architects are to have their own version of the Turner Prize. Big money, massive hype and — it is hoped — a deluge of press coverage leading up to the announcement.

The name is good: the Stirling Prize. It has the ring of sound money in your pocket and honours big Jim Stirling, whose star, at his sudden death, stood higher on the international scene than that of even Norman Foster or Richard Rogers. Not so at home perhaps, where his controversial History Library at Cambridge came close to demolition and his experimental housing in Runcorn was bulldozed to the cheers of locals.

But can architecture generate the kind of controversy that fuels the literary world's Booker Prize or the art world's Turner? To achieve this, you would need a shortlist consisting of Nigel Coates, Terry Farrell, Rodrick Grindridge, Zaha Hadid, John Outram and Quinlan Terry. Then the British architectural scene would erupt. Lady Stirling, for one, would have strong views on Quinlan Terry ("Not those villas in Regent's Park") and the artful Hadid may still not have a completed building on British soil.

You could say that in recent years British architecture has had more awards than there is space to report: the RIBA (Royal Institute of British Architects) Awards, the Royal Fine Art Commission/Sunday Times Building of the Year, the Financial Times Award and the Civic Trust Awards. On the international scene

architecture has bigger prizes still: the \$100,000 American Frick Prize, the \$250,000 Carlsberg and the Mies van der Rohe Pavilion Award. All these are for "lifetime achievement", although the recipient may be quite young. The appeal of the Stirling Prize is that it is for a single project.

The £20,000 Stirling Prize money may be similar to the Booker and Turner, but the opportunity for tension and drama at present is substantially less. The shortlist will not be chosen from a list of shooting stars, but from seven worthies — the best housing or houses, commercial, health, education, sport and community buildings, as well as the best conservation project — although these are unlikely to win unless there is a substantial element of new work. Laurels are naturally given to the big names, but the RIBA selectors are also good at spotting high-quality work by small practices around the country.

The Stirling award results from *The Sunday Times* switching allegiance from the Royal Fine Art Commission to RIBA. A back-of-the-envelope calculation showed the switch meant that the sponsorship money could go as a single handsome prize to the architect, rather than being swallowed up in travel expenses, dinners and the like (and there is no need for the Fine Art Commission to despair, as BSkyB has stepped in to fill the gap left by *The Sunday Times*).

The beauty of it is that RIBA does an extensive countrywide trawl for potential candidates



Ian Ritchie's glass-and-steel exhibition hall in Leipzig would surely make him a contender for the prize, if projects outside Britain were eligible.

through its regional awards. The judges of the new Stirling Prize will be presented with a well-researched shortlist at no cost. And the judges have the right to add their own choices. But will it be controversial? That depends on the judges' propensity to speak out, even resign. Not much chance of that at present, as initially there may be just three: the president of RIBA, a representative of *The Sunday Times*, and one other. On top of this, just a fortnight will elapse between the announcement of the shortlist on November 7 and the award of the prize on November 21.

Stirling's widow feels passionately that the prize should help young, struggling architects. "They have a horrible time at the moment, really awful," she knows, too, the value of prizes to an architect's

career. "The Aluminium Prize which Jim received for the engineering department at Leicester University helped us to buy our first house."

A sceptic could say that £20,000 might transform the career of a struggling author but mean little to a Foster, a Rogers or a Hopkins, and not a great deal to many architects after the money has been shared around the office, as in most cases it certainly deserves to be.

Chris Palmer of RIBA hits back: "£22,000 is the average annual earnings of the country's 28,000 practising architects. Kingsley Amis may have spent his Booker Prize money on new curtains and A.S. Byatt on a swimming pool. You won't catch an architect doing that."

The new award goes exclusively to architects but, with

many of today's adventurous high-tech buildings, engineers deserve to share the glory. Tony Hunt was the structural engineer for the RIBA Building of the Year in both 1994 and 1995, first for the Waterloo International Terminal and then for the Huddersfield Stadium. Hunt had the initial idea for the glass-and-steel span at Waterloo, and it was he who actually brought the architect, Nicholas Grimshaw, in on the job.

If the reputation of British architecture is flying higher than ever before, it is substantially due to the enormous pool of innovative talent in engineering practices. Ove Arup, founded by the great Sir Ove, the man who made the Sydney Opera House stand up, is the prime example.

Today, Arups has its own publicity machine and pro-

duces the best journal in the construction business. The reason is simple. It is widely known that Norman Foster is the architect of Stansted Airport, and that Renzo Piano designed Kansai Airport in Japan. Not many are aware that Arups were the engineers for both these athletic structures.

Chris Wise, an Arup high-flyer, says (only half-jokingly): "Today you will find more people here interested in the arts than scientists. Computers do the best jobs and attract talented people, we have to get recognition for our creative contribution."

At present the Stirling Prize, like the RIBA Awards, is limited to buildings in Britain, but now so many British architects are winning com-

missions abroad that the net should be extended to take in these buildings. Sir James Stirling's most acclaimed building, after all, was his Stuttgart Art Gallery.

Prime candidates would be Will Alsop's stupendous electric-blue regional government headquarters in Marseilles, completed last year, and Ian Ritchie's new glass-and-steel exhibition hall for the Leipzig Fair.

The key question is: will the Stirling Prize make a difference?

Here RIBA has the best answer. When the Lobby Partnership won the RIBA Building of the Year Award last year, they were anything but a household name. Since then they have rocketed to international stardom by winning the commission for the stadium for the Sydney Olympics in the year 2000.

Fusion for all

ADVANCE publicity for this gig, part of the New Directions in Urban Music Series, promised "a fusion of jazz, funk, soul, hip-hop, dub reggae and drum 'n' bass". The formality of the venue notwithstanding, such an adventurous mix of club sounds was exactly what singer Cleveland Watkiss and associates provided in two hours of loosely structured but hard-hitting music.

Despite a less than ringing introductory endorsement from Biyi Adepegba, the series' instigator — "don't blame me if you don't like it: I'm only the promoter" — drummer Mark Gilmore and electric tabla player Talvin Singh kickstarted the proceedings by producing, from a darkened stage, a pounding rhythm liberally embellished with

Cleveland Watkiss Purcell Room

swirls and howls of electronic sound. Once a groove had been established, Watkiss's vocals began to glide smoothly over it, with saxophonist Steve Williamson contributing everything from subterranean rumbling to screeching high-note runs. Effects and samples were provided by DJ La Rouge, and a heavy bass by Orob Angima.

For the two hour-long sets which followed, Watkiss — the Bobby McFerrin of urban club music — grandly presided over an extraordinary mélange of sounds and textures, interspersing earnest appeals for universal peace and harmony with bouts of spacey scating and comic crooning, and indulging in the odd virtuosic display of vigorous mouth percussion. But it was Gilmore's scurrying jungle rhythms, occasionally teasingly stumbling and tripping, but never losing their hectic momentum, which held the music together.

The informality and openness of the music, and the consequent lapses into self-indulgence by some participants, did result in the odd longwindedness. At times, too, the band's restless eclecticism strayed into somewhat arbitrary genre-hopping. Nevertheless, for sheer energy and originality it was hard to beat.

CHRIS PARKER

CONCERTS: Chamber with an electric charge; and brilliance with a big sound in Birmingham

In this extraordinary past month of Lindseys and Emersons, Borodins and Bergs, it has been the Takács Quartet who have taken the crown of glory. When they arrived at the Wigmore Hall for the start of their Schubert cycle (it continues on Saturday and returns in November), there was a palpable sense of expectancy in the air. And the quartet's capacity audience was rewarded by playing which at times reached the point where the music seemed to take on a life of its own.

One of these moments — and it was an extended one — was during the Quartet No 15 in G major. From that opening metamorphosis of minor into major to the strange Trio of the Scherzo, it was as if an electric current were being passed from one player to another. The Takács's *tour de force* was the slow movement, an intense and self-contained little *Winterreise* with its sharp splinters of melody, harmonic dislocations, and journeyman's tread.

Before the interval, the Takács had begun with the B-flat and E-flat major Quartets. The Takács leapt at the latter's merriment, creating a verita-

Four of a magic kind

STRING QUARTETS

ble farmyard of activity, before the sustained song of the slow movement. Like the first, it showed the players' skill in creating a warm blend of textures within which four individual singing voices are still vividly and wonderfully heard.

The night before, at the Queen Elizabeth Hall, the Alban Berg Quartet of Vienna were celebrating their twenty-fifth anniversary. They are only four years older than the Takács, but sound almost twice that. In their venerable and deeply serious playing, the listener can almost feel the players putting themselves through their rigorous pieces, honing their intellects one against another — and espe-

cially against the stern leadership of Günter Pichler.

Unlike the Takács, who have a new leader, and the Emersons, who enterprisingly and enrichingly switch first and second violins, the Berg Quartet maintain their hierarchy. There were times, particularly in the slow movement of the Mozart Quartet in D minor, K421, when one longed to hear more of Gerhard Schulz's more warm-hearted second violin, though the sheer sophistication of discourse in the first movement and the rigours of the finale could not but be admired.

Before a brilliantly conceived performance of Mozart's Quartet in G, K387, the Berg Quartet turned to Schnittke and his Fourth Quartet. This was a magisterial and uncompromising performance of a long and concentrated work, its music dragged into being from outer darkness, almost against its will, buffeted this way and that through microtones and distant Slavic chants, only to end in what, for Schnittke and his writing, is a still unanswered question.

HILARY FINCH

A model tribute

When Ravel wrote his *Mother Goose*, between 1908 and 1910, all that was generally known in Europe of oriental music was the pentatonic scale which he uses with such wit in *Little Ugly*, *Empress of the Pagodas*. The cultures were then so alien to each other that it was inconceivable that anyone brought up in, say, China or Japan would ever be able to write Western music as sophisticated as anyone brought up in Germany or France. That, however, is what was achieved by Toru Takemitsu, who was born in Japan seven years before Ravel died and to whose memory Sir Simon Rattle and the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra dedicated their performance of *Mother Goose* on the day his death was announced.

Takemitsu, who derived much of his inspiration from modern French music, would have enjoyed it.

The first half of the concert in Symphony Hall was a demonstration model of Ber-

CBSO/Rattle Symphony Hall, Birmingham

lioz's *Le Corsaire* overture, featuring all the optional extras available to the conductor, and an extraordinary account of Sibelius's *Violin Concerto*. Sarah Chang's performance was remarkable not so much for the technical maturity worthy of a violinist twice the age of 15 as for its interpretative assurance and his physical relationship with the music. It is not often that an audience encounters both youthful freshness and the big sound, the poise and the brilliance normally developed after at least half a lifetime's experience. The occasional expressive exaggeration or uncertainty in ensemble was a welcome indication that she still has something to achieve and is not due for retirement just yet.

GERALD LARNER

Great heavens above

RADIO

Even so, astronomers are easily mocked, what with all that stargazing from back gardens while the real world turns, the hills come in and the guttering falls down. But Ruth Prince, was an affectionate documentary which happily resisted the ribald. Amateurs such as George Alcock, doyen of the breed at 83, are the full-time eyes of astronomy and

their commitment makes a real contribution. Alcock has discovered several novae.

Starstruck is the type of programme Radio 4 does particularly well these days, introducing the variety of voices to the network that Liz Forgan advocated when she became managing director of network radio three years ago.

People misunderstood that desire, thinking that it meant Goedicke newscasters, and there was a predictable clamour from middle England. But

the Radio 4 audience is still there and its grumbles have always been part of its charm. Forgan's influence in making Radio 3 react to the sampler-programming of Classic FM is more debatable, but her role in transforming Radios 2 and 5 has been uncontestedly positive.

So in the week of her surprise resignation — not that an *astrologer* would have been surprised — *Starstruck* was not the only programme, and Radio 4 not the only network, to demonstrate that her legacy is an enriching one.

PETER BARNARD

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Security for papers held under solicitor's lien

Ismail and Another v Richards Butler (a Firm)
Before Mr Justice Moore-Bick
[Judgment February 16]

Where a solicitor had a lien over papers under an existing retainer the court was not prevented from exercising its discretion to interfere with that lien where there existed a concurrent and general lien arising from naturally concluded retainers.

Order 23, rule 6 of the Rules of the Supreme Court under which a court might order payment into court in full in a claim for the recovery of specific property did not displace the established jurisdiction of the court to grant relief in equity against the exercise of a solicitor's lien.

Mr Justice Moore-Bick said in the Queen's Bench Division when giving judgment in an appeal by Dr Fawaz Ahmed Abu Ismail and the Arrata Puto Company Ltd against the order on January 9 of Master Pillard that Butler, solicitors, and into court, Richards Butler should deliver to the plaintiffs all papers belonging to them.

The plaintiffs had had a long standing relationship with the defendant to act on their behalf in litigation. There had been an unwritten understanding, the plaintiff said, that fees from the partner originally handling his work would not exceed £175 an hour. When that partner retired, written arrangements were made but with no mention of hourly rates. It transpired that the new partner proposed hourly rates of £235 for himself and £150 for his assistant.

The relationship between the plaintiff and defendant subsequently broke down and the plaintiffs instructed new solicitors and asked the defendant for their papers so that ongoing litigation would not be prejudiced.

The defendant refused to do so on any of the terms offered by the plaintiff, insisting on payment of fees in full and it ultimately issued a writ to recover its fees. Meanwhile as the lives became increasingly pressing the plaintiffs issued a summons seeking delivery up of the papers with the defendant's bills to be taxed.

Mr Robert Deacon for the plaintiffs, Mr Graham Charkham for the defendant.

MR JUSTICE MOORE-BICK said that Mr Deacon had submitted that it was well established that the court imposed a restriction on a solicitor's exercise of his lien in order to avoid injustice which the client might otherwise suffer if prevented from pursuing litigation. There

being nothing exceptional about the present case, the master had been wrong to require the plaintiffs to pay substantial sums to the defendant and into court to release the documents.

The defendant contended, inter alia, that the application fell within the scope of and was governed exclusively by the provisions of Order 23, rule 6 of the Rules of the Supreme Court and therefore the court could only order it to deliver up papers against payment in full of the full amount of the claim.

It further submitted that it had been retained by the plaintiffs in several different matters some of which had been completed long ago with fees outstanding. Each gave rise to a general lien which could not later become qualified merely as a result of the defendant's subsequent termination of other retainers in uncompleted matters.

His Lordship examined the development of the law relating to the exercise of a solicitor's lien including the cases of *Heslop v Metcalfe* (1837) 3 My & Cr 183; *Robins v Goldingham* (1872) LR 13 Eq 440; *Gumlen Chemical Co (UK) Ltd v Froehner Ltd* (1980) 1 WLR 614 and *A v B* (1994) 1 All ER 369.

It had long been recognised that a solicitor had the general right to embargo his client by withholding papers in order to force him to pay what was due and that the court would not compel him to produce them at the instance of his client. Where the solicitor discharged himself he was not allowed to exercise his lien so as to interfere with the course of justice. In those circumstances the overriding principle was that the court should make such order as was most conducive to the interests of justice by weighing up (a) the fact that the litigation should not be deprived of material relevant to the conduct of his case and (b) that litigation should be conducted with due regard to the interests of the court's own officers who should not be left without payment for what was justly due to them.

In the defendant's first point, his Lordship was unable to accept that Order 23, rule 6 was intended to or did sweep away the established jurisdiction of the court to grant relief in equity against the exercise of a solicitor's lien.

It would be removed from the court's valuable discretion and it would have rendered the client whose solicitor had discharged himself significantly worse off than under the existing law in that in every case it would have been necessary to pay into court the full amount of the former solicitor's claim in order to recover his papers.

It was pointed out in the defendant's second line of argument that all previous cases on the point had been concerned with a solicitor who had been retained to conduct a single piece of litigation which was still pending and whose lien only arose from that retainer.

It was submitted that since the retainers had expired naturally in relation to other matters on which the defendant had been retained it had not discharged them.

Accordingly, one of the essential grounds of the court's jurisdiction to restrict the exercise of the lien arising under those retainers was missing nor could those liens be affected by the discharge of any other retainers whether brought about by the plaintiffs or the defendant.

In his Lordship's judgment where a solicitor terminated his retainer in relation to a live case the essential nature of the problem of doing justice as between solicitor and client was not altered by the fact that the solicitor had previously been instructed on a matter which had by then become dead and thereby had a concurrent lien over the papers in the case which was still live.

For the court to restrict the exercise of the lien which arose under an earlier retainer in the same manner as the lien arising under the current retainer was consistent with the principle underlying the exercise of the equitable jurisdiction established in the decided cases.

There was, in his Lordship's view, therefore jurisdiction in such cases to make an order that papers be delivered up and the court should do so unless exceptional circumstances indicated otherwise.

Although on the facts the defendant had brought an end to the retainers the reality of the case was that the value of the lien to the defendant was likely to be considered diminished if papers were handed over.

His Lordship could not decide on the material before him whether the defendant was entitled to recover the full or any amount of its claim but taking all the circumstances of the case into account his Lordship considered that some departure from the normal practice was called for in the interests of justice.

Accordingly the case required that the plaintiffs provide some security for the defendant's claim and an appropriate amount was nothing short of the full amount of the claim. His Lordship therefore set the sum at £450,000.

Solicitors: Mishcon de Reya; Richards Butler.

Original tenant liable after disclaimer

Hindcastle Ltd v Barbara Attenborough Associates Ltd and Others
Before Lord Keith of Kinkaid, Lord Griffiths, Lord Browne-Wilkinson, Lord Lloyd of Berwick and Lord Nicholls of Birkenhead
[Speeches February 22]

The disclaimer of a lease under section 178 of the Insolvency Act 1986 by the liquidator of a company which had taken an assignment of the lease did not affect the obligations of the original tenant or his guarantor to pay the rent due under the lease.

The House of Lords so held in dismissing an appeal by the second and third defendants, the liquidators of CIT Developments Ltd and Mr Patrick John Whitten, against a decision of the Court of Appeal (Sir Stephen Brown, President, Lord Justice Rose and Lord Justice Millett) (The Times July 6, 1994) [1995] QB 93 upholding orders made by Mr Simon Goldblatt, QC, sitting as a deputy High Court judge, granting the plaintiff landlords, Hindcastle Ltd, summary judgment in respect of arrears of rent due under a lease.

The first defendants, Barbara Attenborough Associates Ltd, the original tenant, did not appeal.

CIT, who were the intermediate assignees of the lease, were in the same position as the original tenant as they had entered into direct covenants with the landlords covering the rest of the term of the lease. Mr Whitten, a director of CIT, was their surety. In 1989 CIT assigned the lease to Prest Ltd, who subsequently went into liquidation. Prest's liquidator gave notice of disclaimer of the lease pursuant to section 178.

Section 178 provides: "(4) A disclaimer... (a) operates so as to determine the rights, interests and liabilities of the company in or in respect of the property disclaimed; (b) does not, except so far as is necessary for the purpose of releasing the company from any liability, affect the rights or liabilities of any other person."

Mr David Oliver, QC and Miss Carolyn Walton for the defendants; Mr Kim Lewison, QC and Mr Jonathan Arkush for the landlords.

LORD NICHOLLS said that the defendant was liable for non-payment of the rent and service and other charges unless the liquidator's act in disclaiming the lease ended their liability. That depended upon the proper interpretation of the disclaimer provisions in the Insolvency Act 1986.

In dismissing the defendant's appeal the Court of Appeal had applied the decision in *Hill v East and West India Dock Co* (1884) 9 App Cas 448 and distinguished the decision in *Stacey v Hill* (1901) 1 QB 649. The tension between those decisions lay at the heart of the appeal.

Sections 178 to 182 of the 1986 Act were the sections governing the disclaimer of onerous property by a liquidator of a company that was being wound up. The motor of the disclaimer provisions in their present form was the Bankruptcy Act 1883.

The Bankruptcy Act 1883 had introduced machinery enabling the trustee in bankruptcy, for the first time, to disclaim leases and other onerous property. Section 23 stated the consequences of disclaimer. If the property disclaimed was a lease it was deemed to have been surrendered.

From an early date the court had robustly declined to give effect to the literal construction of those words. In *Ex parte Walton*, in *re Law* (1888) 17 Ch D 746, 754 Sir George Jessel, Master of the Rolls, stated that section 23 meant that the property was to be disclaimed "so far only as is necessary in order to relieve the bankrupt and his estate and the trustee from liability". Those words might well be the source of the express provision to the same effect included in all the disclaimer legislation from 1883 onwards.

In *Hill v East and West India Dock Co* the 1883 Act had become the signature of a lease had become disclaimed. The House of Lords decided that the original tenant remained liable for rent notwithstanding the disclaimer of the lease under section 23 of the 1883 Act.

When the House of Lords heard the appeal in *Hill v East and West India Dock Co* the 1883 Act had been replaced by the Insolvency Act 1883. Lord Cairns described the new statute as much more explicit and said that the question raised by the appeal was therefore not one which could very well occur again.

A case concerning the liability of a guarantor came before the Court of Appeal in *Stacey v Hill*. The defendant had guaranteed payment of the rent by the tenant. The tenant became bankrupt and his trustee disclaimed the lease. The landlord did not resume possession of the premises and the guarantor was not liable for rent after the lease was disclaimed.

The first and broadest ground put forward in support of that decision was that on disclaimer the lease came to an end and no rent could subsequently be recovered under it. The defendants submitted that there was no logical distinction between the position of the original tenant and the position of a guarantor and that *Stacey v Hill* was to be applied to *Hill v East and West India Dock Co*.

His Lordship agreed that such differences as there were between an original tenant and a guarantor were not material. Post-disclaimer, both were liable or neither.

Either the 1883 Act had left the existing law unchanged, but unchanged, in which case both the

original tenant and the guarantor remained liable notwithstanding disclaimer, or the Act had changed the law and relieved original tenants and guarantors alike from liability post-disclaimer.

The Lordship was unable to agree that the reasoning in *Stacey v Hill* was to be preferred. That reasoning flew in the face of the plain language of the statute and failed to give effect to paragraph (b) of section 178(4) and its evident purpose.

The 1883 Act had made explicit what *Hill v East and West India Dock Co* had held to be implicit in the 1869 Act. Parliament had incorporated the judicial interpretation of the 1869 Act into the 1883 Act, in terms which had been continued by Parliament to this day, most recently in 1986.

The second ground put forward in aid of the principle that the release of a debtor discharged his guarantor. As a general proposition that was true. But here again, the conclusion sought to be drawn failed to take account of the saving words in paragraph (b) of subsection (4).

Disclaimer operated to determine the insolvent's liabilities under the lease, but subject to a qualification: not so as to affect the rights or liabilities of other persons. Parliament had provided that the general rule should not apply. The release of the insolvent debtor was not to discharge a surety from his liabilities to the lessor.

The third ground was that the exception built into paragraph (b) applied in the case of a guarantor. In order to release the insolvent from all his liabilities in respect of the lease, it was necessary to release the guarantor from his obligations to the landlord.

His Lordship was unable to agree. In order to release the insolvent it was sufficient to extinguish the insolvent's liability to indemnify the guarantor. It was not necessary to go further, and release the guarantor from his liability to the lessor.

The fourth ground was that, under an original tenant, who undertook liabilities without any right of recourse against anyone at that time, a guarantor's right to be indemnified by the principal debtor was inherent in the relationship between them. His Lordship and disclaimed any lingering hesitation was the frankly absurd results produced if *Stacey v Hill* and *Hill v East and West India Dock Co* were left standing uneasily side by side.

First, in practical terms, an original tenant guaranteed that the tenants for the time being would perform their obligations. There was no practical justification for distinguishing his position from that of a formal guarantor.

Second, the present case was illustrative of the serious distinctions which would follow. Accord-

ing to *Stacey v Hill*, a surety's liability was discharged when the principal debtor's obligation to indemnify him was determined by disclaimer of the lease.

But that reasoning would not operate to release the surety in the present case. He had guaranteed the obligations of CIT, not Prest. The right of indemnity which then arose was against CIT.

That right, which was the all important right according to *Stacey v Hill*, was not determined when the lease was disclaimed by the liquidator of Prest. The disclaimer operated to determine the surety's right of indemnity against Prest, but that right arose after he had given the guarantee.

Determination of a right of indemnity arising later did not bring down the guarantee, because it was not an inherent part of the guarantee. So the end result, on that footing, would be that disclaimer operated to discharge the guarantee if the disclaimer was in the insolvency of the principal debtor, but not if the disclaimer was in the insolvency of an assignee.

That would make no sort of legal or commercial sense. That would mean that directors who guaranteed their company's obligations would not be liable if their own company became insolvent while tenant, but they would be liable if an assignee from their company encountered financial difficulties while tenant.

Practical mischief could arise when former tenants were held liable for defaults by subsequent assignees. However, *Stacey v Hill* did not have the effect of striking down liabilities by reason of the acts of assignees over whose identity a guarantor had no control.

Stacey v Hill had the paradoxical effect of discharging the guarantee in a circumstance in which it was primarily aimed and when there were no such mischief, but of not discharging the guarantee in a more remote circumstance where the mischief following assignments might arise.

His Lordship was unable to accept that that was, or should be, the state of the law. It would lack any rational or practical basis. It would defeat coherent explanation. It would defeat the parties' intentions. His Lordship would overrule *Stacey v Hill*.

LORD KEITH, LORD GRIFFITHS and LORD BROWNE-WILKINSON agreed and Lord Lloyd delivered a concurring speech.

Solicitors: Houghtons; Chiffings.

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Correction

In *Carroll v Tiggs v RMC Panel Products* (The Times February 10) an error in the defendant respondent was Mr Mark Vanhagen.

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Young take on rugby heroes and tackle them on game's burning issues

'Is it true about you and Princess Di?'

They came from far and wide, from Lichfield, Aston and Gravelly Hill, Duddleston and Erdington. And they brought sandwiches, packets of crisps and cans of cola, also bags containing football boots. This was the Cellnet Rugby Roadshow for which we gathered at Sutton Coldfield's ground, west of Birmingham. There were upwards of 100 clients, though they looked less: it is always hard to quantify small boys because they take up so little room.

Dean Richards, Martin Bayfield and Tony Underwood were among the coaches



FREUD ON FRIDAY

advised to give advice respectively on body positions, rucking and mauling, and handling skills: what happened was that for the first part of the day they gave autographs — signing books and sheets of paper and bus passes, and doing so with rare goodwill, even when asked to sign their names several times so that the recipient could use signatures for trading.

Then there were photo opportunities: a mock lineout in which one side had a two-foot per man height advantage over the other; a simulated scrum featuring a rugby ball shaped six-year-old sitting cheerfully in front of a third of a tonne of international forwards.

"Why him and not me?" the

small boy's friend asked. "He's wearing a Cellnet shirt," the official photographer replied.

Sutton Coldfield play rugby in the Midlands second division, are about halfway in the table, get home crowds of anything up to 200 who come in for nothing but are given the opportunity to throw loose change into a bucket at half-time.

On Saturdays, Sutton Coldfield put out seven XV's, a colts team and a women's team. What they have — and no one else, according to the ex-Cardiff, ex-Warrington chief youth coach, John Bevan — is a bespoke indoor playing area. This has a surface that looks like camel droppings but is state-of-the-art fibreglass and enriched with cotton waste and soft to the fall, though it needs to be watered twice a week.

At noon, the boys sit at one end of the room, the international stand facing them. It is question time.

"What is it like playing at Twickenham?"

"Would you join a rugby league club?"

"What was your most embarrassing moment?"

Each question is answered by each star, seriously and with some humour, though "Is it true about you and Princess Diana?" perplexed them.

Whom are you asking? All of them. They all denied relationships.

Richards is the boys' favourite. He not only gives the best answers but also signs autographs as if he enjoys it, goes out to the sodden pitch and coaches while the others drink tea and await the arrival of fish and chips from a nearby shop.

After, a string of questions to Underwood:

"Did you enjoy making the pizza commercial?" Yes.

"What did it feel like playing against Josiah Lomut?" Shell-shocked, an awesome sight.

"Do you fight with your



Richards gladly passes on some of his skills to a budding young rugby player at the Cellnet Roadshow

brother?" No, we are very lovey-dovey.

"How much do you get paid?" I ain't not saying.

A boy asked Bayfield whether he had received any lucrative offers. "Yes, from Harlequins, but I did not take it up because of my extreme loyalty to Northampton."

On to quizzing their hero:

"How did you get your black eye?"

"When will you retire?"

"Do you drink a lot?"

"Why was Bayfield dropped from the England squad?"

"Who is your best mate in the international team?"

"Jack Rowell," Richards said. "He's got no one else."

The fish and chips arrive, no one suggests that a more thoughtfully arranged meal might have been produced by the sponsors of the Egon Ronay restaurant guide...

On to quizzing their hero:

"How did you get your black eye?"

"When will you retire?"

"Do you drink a lot?"

land stars move genially among their admirers and are loved.

On the fibreglass, a boy licks a ball into the air and "marks" each catch, looking around vainly for sounds of approval.

On the pitch, an eight-year-old tries to throw a ball over Bayfield, who is off him, while Underwood and Graham Rowntree organise a three-quarter line. A couple of mothers and a sister or two shiver on the touchline and

take the occasional photograph for the family album, pictures which will be captioned: "Our Fred with Dean Richards at Sutton Coldfield, February 22, 1996."

The roadshow is over. Parents arrive to collect their offspring and the sponsors give each of us a T-shirt and a rugby football. I drive off into the wetlands of wintry Warwickshire, where they still have allotments: at Wyde Green I see a man harvesting Brussels sprouts.

Referees turn to penalty try to make a point



GERALD DAVIES

Rugby Commentary

When should a penalty try not be a penalty try? The question suggests the possibility of a refereeing error, or that there might be an unwarranted increase in the award of this form of scoring. Whereas at one stage it was a rare way of scoring, it has become more prevalent. If it has become a regular feature in club games there is not, according to Ken Rowlands, the Welsh Rugby Union's referee development officer, a corresponding increase as yet at international level. The chances are, though, that there will be.

It is a relatively new phenomenon. A little more than a decade ago, a penalty try was so rare that it was awarded only in the event of an intentional knock-on. Since then there has been a shift in the context of this method of scoring, which doubtless will continue.

Nowadays, teams manoeuvre ways by which the score can be awarded. In certain situations there is a growing expectation among the crowd for the referee to award such a score.

There was such an expectation at Twickenham when Wales suffered in the scrum against England. It has become a legitimate tactic for the attacking team to play for the penalty try.

In addition, there emerges the "professionally" executed foul. Here lies the danger.

In the Seventies, the collapsed scrum, despite its extreme danger, became a deliberate tactic for the team defending its own line. By the Eighties, it had become a fashionable area for referees to award penalty tries. But scrumming tactics became so refined that nobody was sure who actually perpetrated the collapsed scrum. Furthermore, for a penalty try to be given against a pack which, without intent, buckles under the pressure of a pack containing more than eight players is clearly a nonsense.

The critical factor is the balance of probability and the certainty in the referee's mind. The penalty try should be awarded when, as the law states, but for foul play "a try would probably have been scored". Scotland believed

that Scott Hastings should have been awarded a penalty try against Wales last weekend. After Arwel Thomas had put Wales into a 6-3 lead, the Scotland centre, with the aid of a spare ball thrown by Logan from the touchline, took a quick kick-off. He was obstructed by Justin Thomas, for which the visitors were awarded a penalty.

The probability of a try being scored would have been open to question since it was Wayne Proctor who was the more likely to reach the ball first over the goal line.

Some have queried the fact that Hastings did not take the drop kick "at or from behind the centre of the halfway line". The tricky bit is to define "behind". Rugby law does not define the distance. In this case, and it would have been churlish for anyone to have objected. Rather it should be full marks for a brilliant piece of Scottish initiative.

In Paris, the award of a penalty try provided another knotty point. What if a try is scored instead of the prospect of one? Should a penalty try be awarded? Ireland crossed the line for a score in injury time. Ed Morrison gave Ireland a penalty try instead. According to the law, this should occur only if a try "would probably have been scored in a more favourable position than that where the ball was grounded" — that is, closer to the posts for the conversion. With Ireland taking a quick penalty five metres from the line, and in a crowded space, this was not at all likely.

Morrison indicates part of a growing trend to penalise the infringements which a team repeatedly commits, as happened in the Varsity match in December. Rowlands sees the repeated infringement as the bane of the game in the next few years.

"Falling on the ball and effectively killing it, as well as the clutter and offside in midfield, are the likely sources of persistent offences," he says. "Even so, the guiding principle must always be the probability of a try being scored at the time of a particular infringement."

Champions cashing in on ice skating revolution

FROM JOHN HENNESSY IN PARIS

THE International Skating Union (ISU) could hardly have chosen a more appropriate setting than Paris for its inaugural Champions Series (formerly Grand Prix) final, since the *crème de la crème* will be competing here this evening and tomorrow.

They skate not only for the honour but also for a fistful of dollars as the ISU expands its horizons to halt the drift towards professionalism. Un-

told riches, for this sport at least, are in prospect. There will be \$60,000 (about £40,000) to the winners of the four events, and total prize-money amounts to some \$666,000.

The word "amateur" has been banished from the ISU lexicon and a skater remains "eligible" so long as he or she takes part in events authorised by the governing body. Thus Oksana Grischuk and Evgeny Platov, the Russian holders of the Olympic, world and European ice dance titles, who would have been

expected to follow in the path trodden by Jayne Torvill and Christopher Dean, among others, now find it profitable, indeed lucrative, to stay with the ISU. It is rumoured that they haul in \$1 million a year each, without having had to sell their souls to commercial operators.

The field this weekend is confined to those who have accumulated most points in well-established competitions in Canada, Japan, the United States, Germany and France, and is therefore festooned with gold medals.

The men's championship, as an example, embraces the three different holders of the Olympic, world and European titles, respectively Alexei Umanov, of Russia, Elvis Stojko, of Canada, and Viatcheslav Zagorodnikov, of Ukraine.

The other singles event has been given added point by the victory last week in St Petersburg of Irina Slutskaya, who has moved past her seventeenth birthday since winning the European title for Russia in Sofia last month.

In perhaps the least strong entry of the four, the American champion, Michelle Kwan, though two years younger, had seemed a strong favourite, for all her tender years, after winning three of the five qualifying events, of which only two could count.

In St Petersburg, however, admittedly hampered by a cold, she could finish only third, beaten not only by Slutskaya but also another Russian, Maria Butyrskaya. There were no British qualifiers.

SHEEHAN on BRIDGE

By ROBERT SHEEHAN, BRIDGE CORRESPONDENT

There are a number of well-known adages associated with bridge. They are taught to novices as general rules and mostly contain sound basic advice. Some examples are: "Second Hand Plays Low", "Third Hand Plays High", "Cover an Honour with an Honour", "Lead Through Strength and Up to Weakness" etc. In this refresher article I examine "Second Hand Plays Low".

This is a basic piece of advice handed out to beginners at partnership whist-based games. What it means is that if you are the second person to play to a trick then you should generally play a low card. Here are some lay-outs to illustrate the point:

When declarer plays low from the closed hand, you must play low, and there is no way declarer can make more than two tricks. If he plays the ten, your partner will win with the king and you must later make your queen; if he plays the ace, your side will still make both the queen and king. If, on the other hand, you play the queen, declarer will make three tricks. He will win with the ace and later lose a trick only to your partner's king.

For details of *The Times* Midland Private Banking National Bridge Challenge, contact the event organisers on 0181-942 9506 or write to: Britannia Building, Beverley Way, New Malden, Surrey KT3 4PH or fax to 0181-942 9569

Robert Sheehan writes on bridge Monday to Friday in Sport and in the Weekend section on Saturday.

Answers on page 38

By Philip Howard

White to play. This position is from the game Vinogradov — Fedin, USSR 1973. How did White break through the black kingside defences in dramatic style?

Solution on page 38

By Raymond Keene

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Solution on page 38

KEENE on CHESS

By RAYMOND KEENE, CHESS CORRESPONDENT

National league

Rounds five and six of the Four Nations League were contested in Birmingham over the weekend. One of the best games was that between Grandmaster Murray Chandler, heading the British Chess Magazine team against Fide master Andrew Kinsman, representing Guildford.

White: Murray Chandler

Black: Andrew Kinsman

Four Nations League, February 1996

Sidilian Defence

1. e4 c5

2. Nf3 Nc6

3. d4 Qc7

4. Nc3 e5

5. Nf5 Nc6

6. Nf3 Qc7

7. Qc2 Qc7

8. Qd1 Qc7

9. Nc3 Qc7

10. Nd5 Qc7

11. Ne3 Qc7

12. Bc3 Qc7

13. Qc2 Qc7

14. Qc2 Qc7

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16. Qc2 Qc7

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LEGAL NOTICES

STATE OF NEW YORK SUPREME COURT COUNTY OF ONEIDA

FELICITY ISABELLE COLBY RAMBLE, Plaintiff,

-VS- JAMES HENRY RAMBLE, Defendant.

"ACTION FOR DIVORCE"

SUMMONS WITH NOTICE Index No. D33300 R.J.I. No. 32-95-1790

Plaintiff designates Oneida County as the place of trial. The basis of venue is Plaintiff's residence. Plaintiff resides at Clinton, New York. To the above named Defendant:

YOU ARE HEREBY SUMMONED to serve an Answer or Notice of Appearance on the Plaintiff's attorney within twenty (20) days after the service of this Summons, exclusive of the day of service (or within thirty (30) days after the service is complete if this Summons is not personally delivered to you within the State of New York); and in case of your failure to Answer or otherwise appear, judgment will be taken against you by default for the relief demanded in the notice set forth below.

NOTICE: The nature of this action is to dissolve the marriage between the parties. The relief sought is a judgment of absolute divorce in favor of the plaintiff, a judgment of the Court deems just and proper.

Dated: January 22, 1996. HAGE AND HOBACIA (Attorneys for Plaintiff) 610 Charlotte Street, Utica, New York 13501, (315) 797-9850

NOTICE: The nature of this action is to dissolve the marriage between the parties. The relief sought is a judgment of absolute divorce in favor of the plaintiff, a judgment of the Court deems just and proper.

Dated: January 22, 1996. HAGE AND HOBACIA (Attorneys for Plaintiff) 610 Charlotte Street, Utica, New York 13501, (315) 797-9850

NOTICE: The nature of this action is to dissolve the marriage between the parties. The relief sought is a judgment of absolute divorce in favor of the plaintiff, a judgment of the Court deems just and proper.

Dated: January 22, 1996. HAGE AND HOBACIA (Attorneys for Plaintiff) 610 Charlotte Street, Utica, New York 13501, (315) 797-9850

IN THE MATTER OF THE INVOICENCY ACT 1985

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IN THE MATTER OF

Number-crunching is the insects' buzz word

I hope I've got this right. If a pair of flies were left alone to mate, and then all the eggs survived and multiplied for a year, at the end of that period the number of maggots would be... wait for it... as big as the Earth. So John Shrapnell told us last night in *Alien Empire* (BBC1), and it was a throwaway remark. You were supposed to gulp and think, and glance behind your chair for a big ball of maggots rolling towards you. Fly-bashing sessions with a rolled-up newspaper suddenly look like justified self-defence.

Alien Empire is a horribly watchable series; it has to be admitted. Last night it concerned the prime instinct of insects — replication — and kicked off with eye-boggling footage of an invasion of mayflies from the Mississippi. Once a year white, shiny, silent cars are converted into brown, soft, buzzy ones, as a billion-strong plague of winged

insects rises from the river. They have no mouths; they live, mate and die on a single day. It's an awful thought. For hundreds of millions of years, each generation has hatched, stretched its wings, felt peckish, but tragically run out of time. The intrusive cinematic music in *Alien Empire* gets no better. Close your eyes and the indicated scene is specific, but irrelevant behind a sequence of two silk moths in a warehouse, the music maddly announces "Prague. Cold War love affair. Bridge. Water. Night." Still, the music last night was carefully drowned out on occasion, when we met insects that hear in "ultrasound", and are therefore more tuned in to clicks than melody. Also, in a staged scene, a cicada drove a soprano off stage at the Sydney Opera House. Cicadas can reach a volume of 120 decibels, if they really want to.

Wow, amazing facts! Yet some-

times after watching a programme like *Alien Empire*, your memory does a bit of rational tidying up, and says "Hang on, it can't have been 120 decibels, can it?" and then the canker doubt sets in. Halfway through telling someone about the big ball of maggots, you stop yourself. "No, that's ridiculous. Perhaps it was as big as a house. Or a garden shed." Imagine how these big assertions must have affected John Shrapnell, who now wakes up in a sweat most nights. "Oh God, was I supposed to say billions?" he screams. "Where did I get billions from? I said billions."

Back in the insect-free world of crime, *Thief Takers* (ITV) seems mainly concerned to replicate and die, too. Not content to rip off the music from the vastly superior *NYPD Blue*, last night it got its plotline from *The Godfather*, its guest acting style from Hong Kong film-maker John Woo,



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and a few lines from *Chinatown*. None of this second-hand-Rose stuff would matter, of course, if *Thief Takers* had a bit of integral dramatic energy; but as an organism it shows few signs of life. The idea that it's *The Sweetest* for 1990s is just a bad joke. Recent *Thief Takers* is bewilderingly miscast as the tough guy: possessing no natural air of authority, he seems to have based his snappy, snarly

performance on an observation of pre-menstrual tension. A line such as "Let's get the cars round. This could take a while" offers a variety of nuances for an actor. But Dinsdale sets his lips in a curl and spits it out, just as he later spews out another ostensibly inoffensive line: "Why don't you get some coffee in?"

The plot, concerning an incipient gang war in Chinatown, held a certain amount of interest, however, as the guest actors stole the show, as usual. Ex-military thugs from China had breezed into town, and would brook no resistance from the Triads. All the energy and confidence centred on these cocky, attractive villains who tore down "Remember Tiananmen" posters (presumably because they'd been inside the tanks). They waved automatic weapons from the crooks of their arms; they strutted with their heads thrown back at an impossible haughty angle. They

poked chopsticks into their own throats, as a test of manliness. Oh yes, this was more like it. And given their tendency to fix their eyes on the ceiling, incidentally, escaping them would be an easy matter. You could just crawl on the floor, and they wouldn't see you.

Feeling drained yet? I know I am. Just as *Thief Takers* is an action series with a B12 deficiency, the so-called satirical *Annie's Bar* (Channel 4) lacks other essential nutrients, such as humour. But it has come to life in its first few weeks, and if you don't tune in expecting jokes it is passable. Personally I will watch anything with Larry Lamb in it; a weakness that paradoxically sustains me through many an ordeal. His final speech to the clueless, rookie MP last night: "Resign, you pillock? How can you resign? You only just got here!" was typically heartfelt, and got a laugh for a line

that was not funny. Gosh, it sounds as though I'm clutching at straws. Well, I am, there's no shame in that.

Silent Witness (BBC1) concluded well. This two-part female-pathologist story was finely constructed, and captured some of the horror of violence you get in *Prime Suspect*. You can always tell when a drama wants us to take it seriously: colour is drained out; key scenes are almost black and white. And the victims were children.

My only complaint was that it ought really to have been shown in one evening, like an *Inspector Morse*. But Alan Yentob can't shift the Nine O'Clock News, so that's that. One final kindly note: Amanda Burton's wardrobe of ugly Aertex shirts and unflattering mainly raincoats had clearly been collated by an unclerked enemy. She should watch out for such sabotage in future.

REVIEW



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- 7.00am BBC Breakfast News (82897)
- 9.00am Breakfast News Extra (82897)
- 9.30am Can't Cook, Won't Cook (82897)
- 9.45am Killy (82897)
- 10.30am Good Morning (82897)
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